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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**YEMEN: COMPARATIVE INSURGENCY AND
COUNTERINSURGENCY**

by

Ryan Johnson

March 2015

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Anne Marie Baylouny
Thomas H. Johnson

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YEMEN: COMPARATIVE INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Why have Yemen's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)? This paper finds that the military's poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthi's ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership's pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republic of Yemen.

Yemen faces multiple security problems. Foremost, the country faces threats from various groups including the Huthi Movement, AQAP, Hirak, and tribal elements with the Huthis recently capturing Sanaa. The country's oil supply will soon to run out, which is the main source of government revenue. The country is still in the process of transition required by the Gulf Cooperation Council-negotiated agreement after the Arab Spring. These problems are exacerbated by corruption, social, and economic problems. Finally, state failure remains a real possibility, with the various groups battling for control. In this case, Yemen could become the next Somalia. The worse scenario for the U.S. would for Yemen to become a safe haven for a group intent on attacking U.S. citizens and interests.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	anti-aircraft artillery
AAIA	Aden Abyan Islamic Army
AAY	Ansar Allah (Yemen), also known as the Huthis
APC	armored personnel carrier
AQ	Al Qaeda
AQAP	Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula
AQAP-SA	Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula – Saudi Arabia
AQAP-SBY	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – Soldier’s Brigade of Yemen
AQI	Al Qaeda in Iraq
AQLY	Al Qaeda in the Land of Yemen
AQY	Al Qaeda in Yemen
AQSAP	Al Qaeda in the Southern Arabian Peninsula
AQC	Al Qaeda Core
ASY	Ansar al-Shariah (Yemen)
BY	Believing Youth (Shabab al-Mumin)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNN	Cable News Network
COIN	counterinsurgency
CRS	(U.S.) Congressional Research Service
CSF	Central Security Forces
CSF-CTU	Central Security Forcers-Counter Terrorism Unit
CT	counterterrorism
CTC	Combating Terrorism Center
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council (colloquial), Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (official)
GPC	General People’s Congress
GWOT	global war on terror
HMMWV	high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle

IED	improvised explosive device
IFV	infantry fighting vehicle
IJY	Islamic Jihad in Yemen
JCET	joint combined exchanged training
KA-SOTC	King Abdullah II-Special Operations Training Center – Special Forces Training Center
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MI	Military Intelligence (Yemeni organization)
NDC	National Dialog Conference
NSB	National Security Bureau
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (former South Yemen)
PSO	Political Security Organization
RG	Republican Guard
ROY	Republic of Yemen
RPG	rocket propelled grenade
RSAF	Royal Saudi Air Forces
RSLF	Royal Saudi Land Forces
RSNF	Royal Saudi Naval Forces
SMT	social movement theory
SOF	special operation forces
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic (former North Yemen)
YPC	Yemen Polling Center
YSOF	Yemeni Special Operation Force
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Ruling Yemen is like dancing on the heads of snakes.”

— (former) President Ali Abdullah Saleh¹

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The Republic of Yemen’s (ROY) national integrity and legitimacy are threatened by the loss of control of territory to armed insurgent groups. While multiple groups vie for control on the ground, the Huthi movement and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) are the most challenging groups for the government and have captured swathes of territory. The Huthi movement, having fought the government since 2004, has been more successful than AQAP in gaining land from government or tribal control. AQAP’s control ebbs and flows, whereas the Huthis have gained ground since fighting began.² This recently ended with the Huthis signing a power sharing agreement with the government.³

Why has Yemen’s counterinsurgency/counterterrorism (COIN/CT) polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to AQAP? The strengths and weakness of the Huthi movement, AQAP, and the Yemeni government must be examined, in addition to COIN/CT polices to answer the question. The nature of the Huthis and AQAP must also be considered. The Huthis are part of the domestic Yemeni community. Supporters believe in an “imagined community” of northern Yemenis with a thousand-year Zaydi and Yemeni history that practiced religious tolerance towards Shafi’i Sunnis in Yemen.⁴ AQAP on the other hand, believe in an international pan-

¹ President Saleh quoted in Victoria Clark, *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), back cover.

² Lucas Winter. “The Ansar of Yemen: The Huthis and al-Qaeda.” *Small Wars Journal* (May 2013). <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-ansar-of-yemen-the-huthis-and-al-qaeda>.

³ “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government,” *AFP*, Updated September 22, 2014, <https://nz.news.yahoo.com/a/-/world/25072174/yemen-deal-signed-after-shiite-rebels-seize-government/>.

⁴ Barak A. Salmoni, Bryce Loidolt, and Madeleine Wells, *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2010), 5, 64–6, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG962.html>.

Islamic Caliphate, want the removal of people it considers non-Muslims (including Shia) from the Arabian Peninsula, and want strict shariah law.⁵

This thesis will use a comparative study of insurgency and COIN using mostly qualitative analysis of four variables. First, the background and development of the Huthis and AQAP will be examined using social movement theory to understand why the Huthis have been more successful in recruiting and mobilizing members. Second, the use and effectiveness of COIN and CT⁶ policies by the ROY government will be examined. The third variable examined will be the effectiveness of the Huthis' and AQAP's insurgencies to include factors such as military strategies and tactics, organization and resources, and recruitment. Finally, this paper examines the role of outside support for Huthi movement, AQAP and ROY, and how that support influences those groups.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTION

Yemen faces multiple security problems. Foremost, the country faces threats from various groups including the Huthi movement, AQAP, Hirak⁷ and tribal elements. The country's oil supply will soon run out, which is the main source of government revenue. The country is still in the process of transition required by the Gulf Cooperation Council-negotiated agreement after the Arab Spring. The Yemeni government faces other difficult "problems, a combination of economic and social factors exacerbated by perceptions of corruption."⁸ Finally, state failure remains a real possibility, with the Huthis, AQAP, Hirak, and various tribes, clans and tribal confederations battling for control. In this case, Yemen could become the next Somalia. The worse scenario for

⁵ IHS Jane's, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)," *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Intelligence Centre*, last updated February 25, 2014, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1320834&Pubabbrev=JWIT>.

⁶ The Yemeni government calls both the Huthi and AQAP groups terrorists, although both groups use insurgent tactics. AQAP also engages in terrorism.

⁷ Hirak—also known as the Southern Movement, South Yemen Movement, or the Southern Secessionist Movement.

⁸ IHS Jane's "Executive Summary: Yemen," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, February 12, 2014, 2, [https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303606&Pubabbrev=GULF+.](https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303606&Pubabbrev=GULF+)

the U.S. would be a safe haven for a group intent on attacking U.S. citizens and interests.⁹ At the time of writing, the Huthis have signed a power sharing agreement with the government, but it has not been implemented yet.¹⁰

A detailed study of Yemen's two insurgencies would fill a gap in the comparative COIN literature. A majority of comparative studies of insurgency and counterinsurgency have been written on colonial insurgencies, national liberation wars, or war-time occupations of countries, rather than an underdeveloped country facing an internal struggle. Additionally, Yemen provides a unique opportunity to do a comparative study of a country facing two major, yet different insurgencies at the same time. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the ROY, the Huthis, and AQAP could provide insight into solving the conflicts and similar insurgencies waged in underdeveloped countries.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

The comparative study of Yemen's two insurgencies required for this thesis will cover a range of topics, so a broad range of literature was consulted for the literature review. The topics include the recent history of Yemen, studies of counterinsurgency, studies of insurgency, studies of counterterrorism, the Huthi movement, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and social movement theory.

A history of Yemen mainly dating back to the 1980s is needed to understand the current conflicts between the Yemeni government and the Huthis and al Qaeda. Victoria Clark's *Yemen: Dancing on the Heads of Snakes* provides an overview of history from the late Ottoman period to pre-Arab Spring Yemen. Clark contends that the country is run by "dancing on the heads of snakes," or working with various tribes, clans, confederations, and militias by "mediating, balancing, reconciling, co-opting, rewarding and forgiving."¹¹ This patronage network is dependent on dwindling oil revenue.¹² The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides further details of the current governing

⁹ Ibid., 1–4.

¹⁰ AFP, "Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government."

¹¹ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 279.

¹² Ibid., 279.

environment with the rugged terrain, tribal society, slow socioeconomic development and corruption making it difficult to control territory.¹³ The roots of both the AQAP and Huthis were found in several sources. W. Andrew Terrill of Strategic Studies Institute wrote two small books on Yemen. Terrill notes that AQAP, like the original “al Qaeda central,” (AQC) had its roots in the returning Afghani-Arabs from the Afghan War against the USSR.¹⁴ In the 1990s, al Qaeda in Yemen was the same organization at the AQC.¹⁵ Lucas Winter, writing about the Huthi movement, also known as the Shabab al-Mumin, the Believing Youth (BY), or Ansar Allah, finds that the group originated as a Zaydi revivalist and Islamist¹⁶ group in the 1990s in northern Yemen.¹⁷ After increasing repression from the ROY the movement turned violent in 2004.¹⁸

Knowledge of counterinsurgency (COIN) theory will help with the required qualitative analysis of the two ongoing COIN operations in Yemen. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian’s *Counterinsurgency on Modern Warfare*, a comparative study of 14 wars, finds that the most conflicts are solved with political compromise rather than complete military victory. According to Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, “tactical brilliance at counterinsurgency translates into very little when political and social context is ignored or misinterpreted.”¹⁹ Brutal military tactics, and bad military leadership, are also cited as failures.²⁰ On the other hand, Douglas Porch claims COIN operations are descended from colonial wars and violate the principles of Clausewitz. A conventional

¹³ Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), i, 1–2.

¹⁴ W. Andrew Terrill, *The Struggle for Yemen and the Challenge of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2013) 21–24.

¹⁵ W. Andrew Terrill, *The Conflicts in Yemen and U.S. National Security* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 43–50; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen* 21–24.

¹⁶ Islamism—a type of activism that uses Islam; can be political or apolitical, violent or nonviolent. International Crisis Group, “Understanding Islamism,” *Middle East/North Africa Report* 37 (2005), i.

¹⁷ This report uses *Huthi* for the militia and Believing Youth for the study group.

¹⁸ Lucas Winter, “Yemen’s Huthi Movement in the Wake of the Arab Spring,” *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 5, no. 8 (August 2012), 13–14.

¹⁹ Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian “Introduction” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, 2nd ed., ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford: Osprey, 2008), 16–17.

²⁰ Ibid., 16–17.

war against insurgencies should be waged.²¹ Samuel B. Griffith II boils down the “anti-guerilla” tactics to “location, isolation, and eradication.”²² Yemen struggles with all three. Max Boot’s historical comparative study of 5000 years of guerilla warfare finds guerillas usually lose. He also finds public opinion the most important development in guerilla warfare in the last 200 years, and conventional tactics do not work against unconventional warfare.²³ Lastly, Jane Novak published a short comparative study of Yemen’s current conflicts including the Hirak movement, which is not violent. Novak concludes that the insurgencies are the result of the “criminalization of the state,” arguing that only democratization and rule of law will stop the Huthi, Hirak, and Arab Spring protestors.²⁴

Related to counterinsurgency is insurgency theory. Mao Tse-tung in his classic *On Guerrilla Warfare*, identifies several fundamental steps in achieving military and political victory: “(1) Arousing and organizing the people; (2) achieving internal unification politically; (3) establishing bases; (4) equipping forces; (5) recovering national strength; (6) destroying enemy’s national strength; [and] (7) regaining lost territories.”²⁵ Both the Huthis and AQAP have made efforts in steps 1–4 and 7. Another classic study of insurgency strategy is Robert Taber’s *War of Flea*. In a comparative study of communist revolutions in China, Cuba, and Vietnam Taber finds popular support, protracted conflict, politics, and use of terrain, as the most important facets in successful insurgency.²⁶

²¹ Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 273.

²² Samuel B. Griffith II, “Introduction” in *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, ed. and trans. by Samuel B. Griffith II (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2000), 32.

²³ Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: A Epic History of Guerilla Warfare Through Time* (New York & London: Liverlight Publishing Corp., 2013), 613, 615.

²⁴ Jane Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency in Yemen,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 14, no. 3 (September 2010), 22.

²⁵ Mao Tse-Tung, *Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, ed. and trans. Samuel B. Griffith II (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2000), 43.

²⁶ Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerilla Warfare* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc, 2002), 6, 19, 39, 156.

The use of both COIN and CT, and the general overlap of strategies, by ROY give reason to also study CT strategy. Audrey Kurth Cronin's *How Terrorism Ends* gauged the effectiveness of CT policies by statistical analysis of 457 terrorist organizations from 1968–2006. She finds six ways—usually in some sort of combination—that terrorism ends. Cronin states the methods are: “decapitation, catching or killing the leader; negotiations, transition toward a legitimate political process; success, achieving the objective; failure, imploding, provoking a backlash or becoming marginalized; repression, crushing terrorism with force; and reorientation, transitioning to another modus operandi.”²⁷ She finds that no group was defeated solely through repression. Cronin also dedicates a chapter to al Qaeda where she prescribes negotiations with regional affiliates while exploiting its mistakes to weaken its support base.²⁸ Daniel Byman's *The Five Front War: The Better Way to fight a Global Jihad*, identifies “five fronts” against jihadists. While U.S. centric, the fronts could be modified to a Yemeni perspective. Byman's fronts are: the military to fight insurgent groups and training with allied governments; the war of ideas, using propaganda to “go negative” on insurgent groups; intelligence, working with locals; homeland defense (law enforcement); and finally democratic reform.²⁹ Both Byman and Cronin suggest political routes will ultimately be more successful by stripping the base of supporters from the groups. A statistical study by Christopher Hewitt entitled *The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Polices* is interesting, but due to the inconsistencies in body counts and incident reporting, the method would be impossible to use in Yemen.³⁰

The literature on the Huthi movement is characterized by the small number of high quality work. Foremost is the RAND's *Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon*, which could be described as a bible on the Huthis. The work covers nearly every aspect of the group and conflict, including the sociocultural ecology

²⁷ Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009) vi–ix.

²⁸ Ibid., vi–ix, 141,195.

²⁹ Daniel Byman, *The Five Front War: The Better Way to Fight Global Jihad* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 3–4.

³⁰ Christopher Hewitt, *The Effectiveness of Anti-Terrorist Polices* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1984), 28–35.

of the conflict, weapons and tactics, organization, phases of the war, and government tactics.³¹ Lucas Winter wrote several of articles, detailing the Huthi-Government conflict that suggests that government policies more often than not escalate the situation.³²

The literature on AQAP is plentiful. While there is no definitive tome like the RAND study on the Huthis there are several good studies. First are W. Andrew Terrill's aforementioned books for the Strategic Studies Institute. Importantly, Terrill tracks AQAP's transition from terrorism to full blown insurgency in 2010.³³ Gregory Johnsen's *The Last Refuge* tracts the historical rise of AQAP starting with the Yemenis who traveled to Afghanistan to fight the Soviets, to the first insurgents who ruled parts of southern Yemen.³⁴ Former Ambassador Edmund J. Hull gives the inside story of American and Yemeni policies on AQAP in *High-Valued Target: Countering Al Qaeda in Yemen*.³⁵

Chapter two will examines the groups using social movement theory (SMT) to reveal internal dynamics of AQAP and the Huthis and how the groups mobilize its support. A general understanding of SMT is required to analyze the three fundamental aspects of a social movement: political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures and cultural framing. The concepts are best explained in the excellent anthology by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald.³⁶ A comparative study of SMT, edited by Quintan Wiktorowicz, of Islamist groups reveals the unique cultural features of Islam such as Friday prayers, study circles, terrorist groups, and nongovernment organizations

³¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*.

³² Winter, "Wake of the Arab Spring."; Lucas Winter, "The Ansar of Yemen: The Huthis and al-Qaeda." *Small Wars Journal* (May 2013), <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrn1/art/the-ansar-of-yemen-the-huthis-and-al-qaeda>; Lucas Winter, "Conflict in Yemen: Simple People, Complicated Circumstances." *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2011).

³³ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 43–50; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35.

³⁴ Gregory D. Johnsen, *The Last Refuge* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013) 3–18, 269–288.

³⁵ Edmund J. Hull, *High-Valued Target: Countering Al Qaeda in Yemen* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011).

³⁶ Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction" in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities and Cultural Framing*, ed. Doug McAdam John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1996).

that makes “a strong claim that Islamic activism is one of the most common examples of activism in the world.”³⁷

D. THESIS

Why have Yemen’s COIN/CT polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to AQAP? This study finds the military’s poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthis’ ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership’s pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republican of Yemen. Those are not the only factors, but they are the most important ones in explaining why the Huthis are more successful than the AQAP in capturing, controlling, and governing territory. With four variables there are many lesser reasons, which will be explained in detail in the following chapters.

At the commencement of this study, the superiority of Huthi insurgency was in question. At the time, the Huthis controlled Sadah governorate but at an extremely high cost. The poor, land locked governorate Sadah had tens of thousands killed, thousands of structures and farms destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes as internally displaced persons, and a decade of war. That changed in September and October when a blitzkrieg offense captured most of north-west Yemen. The changes meant additional research and re-writes for the author, but it also meant that the Huthis clearly had a more effective insurgency.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis will analyze the effectiveness Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (COIN/CT) policies by conducting a comparative study of ROY, the Huthis, and AQAP using a fusion of several common analytical methods. A comparative case study of two insurgencies fought in the same country with differing results will allow for an interesting and rigorous examination of Yemen’s counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies. While Yemen calls both groups “terrorists,” and uses both

³⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Introduction” in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5.

COIN/CT tactics against the Huthis and AQAP, both organizations operate as insurgencies groups and I will treat them as such. AQAP does have a record of striking U.S. interests aboard but I will not focus on international terrorism. In sum, I will examine Yemeni COIN/CT polices and Huthi and AQAP insurgency strategies and tactics.

Since the thesis is judging ROY's policies based on the success the Huthis and AQAP, multiple variables must be considered. Since there is no agreed upon standard to measure effectiveness of policies, a Yemen specific model will be used that relies heavily on qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis of the thesis will examine both the governments and the groups. The basic measure of success in this study will be the control of territory for all three groups. The development of the Huthis and AQAP organizations themselves will be evaluated using the historical record and social movement theory. Additional factors considered for the insurgent groups include ideologies, insurgency strategies and tactics, recruitment and popular support. Aspects of Yemen's COIN/CT policies analyzed include strategy, legislation, organizational features and resources, implementation of policies and public support.

This thesis will use principally secondary sources, books, and articles. Primary sources in the form of available data, legislation, government documents, published surveys and media reports will also be used. The information cutoff date is October 2014. The main analysis will run for roughly a decade starting in 2003.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is comprised of six chapters, including three that will focus on the four variables identified earlier. The first chapter is an introduction and updated version of the thesis proposal. The second chapter provides background information on the origins of the Huthis and AQAP, and uses SMT to understand why the Huthis have been more successful in recruiting and mobilizing members. The third chapter examines the effectiveness of Yemeni government's COIN/CT policies by analyzing several factors: the strategy and legislation; the organization, resources and measures, and the public support for the government. The next chapter delves into the effectiveness of AQAP and

the Huthis' insurgency strategies, a concise history of the development of the conflicts with the government, the organization and resources, public and outside support for the insurgent groups, and territorial gains and losses. Chapter V outlines Yemen's international support for its COIN/CT policies. The final chapter will discuss and analyze the finding of the previous chapters and summarize the evidence backing the thesis.

II. BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF INSURGENTS IN YEMEN

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter uses social movement theory (SMT) to analyze the Huthis and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) ability to mobilize individuals to support its cause. SMT "focuses on groups as the proper unit of analysis in explaining collective action."³⁸ Three SMT concepts are used to analyze the Huthis and AQAP, political opportunity structure, mobilizing structure, and cultural framing. First, David S. Mayer and Debra C. Minkoff define political opportunity structure as, "exogenous factors [that] enhance or inhibit prospects for mobilization, for particular sorts of claims to be advanced rather than others, for particular strategies of influence to be exercised, and for movements to affect mainstream institutional politics and policy."³⁹ Related to opportunity is threat, which Paul D. Almeida "denotes [as] the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively."⁴⁰ Second, are mobilizing structures which according to Glenn E. Robinson, "vary from the formal to the informal to the illegal. It is through these structures that movements recruit like-minded individuals, socialize new participants, overcome the free rider problem, and mobilize contention."⁴¹ For high-risk activism Doug McAdams found that "participants were distinguished...on the basis of their (a) greater number of organizational affiliations, (b) higher levels of prior...activity, and (c) stronger and more extensive ties to other participants."⁴² Third, are cultural frames that Mayer N. Zald defines as an "attempt to define the issues, invent metaphors, attribute blame [and] define

³⁸ Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 114–5.

³⁹ David S. Meyer and Debra C. Minkoff "Conceptualizing Political Opportunity," *Social Forces* 82, no. 4 (June 2004): 1457–8.

⁴⁰ Paul D. Almeida, "Opportunity Organizations and Threat Induced Contention: Protest Waves in Authorization Settings," *American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 2 (September 200): 347.

⁴¹ Robinson, "Hamas as Social Movement," 116.

⁴² Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer," *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 1 (July 1986): 64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779717>.

tactics.”⁴³ A social movement needs political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and frames in order to recruit and mobilize followers. Frames are the final element of the social movement tripartite. In order to become involved in a social movement there must be a grievance, and the belief that the social movement can remedy the problem. Social movements convince people they are part of the solution, and can remedy the grievance through a framing process.⁴⁴ They tell people how to look at a problem that their grievances are due to a particular issue, and who is responsible. High-risk activism that includes violence requires additional justification and inspiration.⁴⁵

B. HUTHI MOVEMENT

“*Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death of Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory for Islam!*”

—Huthi slogan.⁴⁶

The Huthi movement, also known as the Shabab al-Mumin (Believing Youth) (BY), or Ansar Allah, originated as a Zaydi revivalist and Islamist⁴⁷ group in the early 1990s in northern Yemen. After increasing repression from the Republic of Yemen (ROY) government the movement turned violent in 2004.⁴⁸ Why did the Zaydi revivalist movement transition to a powerful insurgent group? To understand why, this section uses SMT to better understand the Huthi movement. First, I will explain how the BY/Huthis used political opportunity structures to change from a “community,” to a peaceful Islamist group, into a violent insurgency. Next, I will explain how the Huthis’ mobilizing

⁴³ Mayer N. Zald, “Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing” in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities and Cultural Framing*, ed. Doug McAdam et al. (Cambridge University Press: 1996), 269.

⁴⁴ McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, “Introduction,” 5.

⁴⁵ Mohammed M. Hafez, “Marginalization to Massacres,” in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 45.

⁴⁶ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 15.

⁴⁷ Shia Islamism is characterized strongly by communalism, defense of community from the state and non-state actors, and leadership by religious figures. International Crisis Group, “Understanding Islamism,” 18–21.

⁴⁸ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 13–14.

structures helped the movement gain a large following. Finally, I will examine some of the cultural framing utilized by the Huthis.

1. Origins and Ideologies

The history of northern Yemen and Zaydi Islam provide the foundation of the Huthi movement. Sadah is the religious center of the Zaydi Shia world. The Zaydi Imamate was first established in the Sadah region in 893 by Imam Yahya bin al-Husayn, a *sayyid*,⁴⁹ and member of the Hashemite⁵⁰ clan. The Zaydi Imamate lasted in one form or another for over 1000 years until overthrown in 1962 by Republican forces. A civil war ensued, with Royalist forces backed by Saudi Arabia fighting until defeated in 1970. Starting soon thereafter, as the popularity of the hierarchical Zaydi Islam declined, the popularity of the egalitarian Salafi Sunni sect grew.⁵¹

Zaydism and the Yemeni Imamate practices contain unique tenets that influence the BY and Huthi movement. First, the 1000-year Yemeni Imamate practiced religious tolerance towards Sunnis in Yemen, which constitute a majority of the population (practicing the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence). This tolerance is rooted in the belief, which contrasts with other Shia sects, that the first three Sunni Caliphs were wrong, but not evil or sinful. Additionally, Zaydi worship is nearly identical to Sunni worship and Zaydis are permitted to pray in Sunni mosques.⁵² Zaydis, despite siding with Ali and his descendants, claim to be a Sunni school of jurisprudence, and not a Shia sect.⁵³ Second, Zaydis also believe that an *Imam*⁵⁴ should lead of the state. The *Imam* can be any *sayyid* who is a Zaydi scholar, a warrior, and a champion of justice. He must also publicly claim

⁴⁹ Sayyid (sada *pl.*)— Honorific title for a descendent of Muhammad through Ali; member of Zaydi nobility. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xxiv.

⁵⁰ Hashemite—member of the Banu Hashim, a subclan of the larger Quraysh tribe, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 67fn48.

⁵¹ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 105–6.

⁵² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 64–6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁴ *Imam*—(in Zaydism) legitimate heir of political rule. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xx.

the role of Imam.⁵⁵ Third, Zaydism teaches that is the duty of a Muslim to rebel against an unjust ruler. This contrasts with the official Saudi Salafist “political quietism” and loyalty under a corrupt and unjust ruler.⁵⁶ It is easy to understand why a government would promote Saudi-style Salafism over Zaydism.

2. Political Opportunity Structures

The Huthis seized several political opportunities and responded to several threats that aided in its rise. The significant political opportunities and threats include the decline of Zaydi influence, political liberalization following the union of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), government overreaction to the movement, military success of the Huthis in the Sadah Wars, and finally the Arab Spring.

The roots of the Huthi movement date to the 1980s, when the “Zaydi community” formed under internal and external threats. In the 1970s and 1980s, the practice of Zaydism declined and was endangered by the expansion by Salafism.⁵⁷ Zaydi studies had declined, with mostly older generations studying the traditional northern Yemeni form of Islam by the 1980s.⁵⁸ At the same time, adherents viewed the sect in crisis with the rise of Salafist proselytizing from Saudi Arabia. The Salafists gained political power at the expense of the Zaydis and in some cases took over Zaydi mosques.⁵⁹ Concurrently, tribalism declined in importance as regional trade and boarding schools helped foster an “imagined community” of northern Yemenis and Zaydis.⁶⁰ By the end of the 1980s, the Zaydis felt their sect, with over 1000 years of practice, was under siege.

⁵⁵ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 65; Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 105–6.

⁵⁶ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 105–6.

⁵⁷ Yemen is about 65% Shafi’i (Sunni) and 35% Zaydi (Shia). U.S. Department of State, *2012 Yemen International Religious Freedom Report* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2012), 2.

⁵⁸ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

⁵⁹ Shelagh Weir, “A Clash of Fundamentalisms: Wahhabism in Yemen,” *Middle East Report* no. 204 (Summer 1997), 22, http://www.merip.org/mer204/clash-fundamentalisms?ip_login_no_cache=7b1b39cbbb2fd4e68d47f3b357a77aa2.

⁶⁰ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 5.

The first opportunity utilized by the Zaydi community came in 1990, with the union of the two Yemens and the political liberalization that followed it.⁶¹ This opportunity is also related to the emergence of the social movement's mobilizing structures explained in greater detail in the next section. Political liberalization gave prominent Zaydis space to organize and mobilize. In 1990, a political party using the name Hizb al-Haqq was founded that espoused Zaydi Islamist views and desired to reassert northern Yemen's Zaydi identity.⁶² A youth Zaydi revivalist network was started in 1991, called the Believing Youth Club. By the end of the 1990s, the club had 18,000 students in Sadah alone.⁶³ The BY also administrated social welfare programs, which gave the BY leadership credibility in the Zaydi community.⁶⁴

The next exogenous factor that radically changed the movement was the threat from the government out of Sanaa. Angered by the Yemeni-American “global war on terror” alliance and the Iraq War, the BY engaged in anti-government protests and contentious collective action.⁶⁵ During a 2003 anti-Iraq war protest outside the American Embassy, Huthi protestors started chanting the Huthi slogan with “Death to America!” Yemeni security then clashed with protestors.⁶⁶ The Huthis handed out pamphlets calling President Saleh an American stooge. Supporters refused to pay taxes, cut the Sanaa-to-Sadah Highway, and seized government buildings in Sadah. The government sent Brigadier General Ali Muhsin al-Ahmar and his units into Sadah to restore order and arrest BY leader Husayn al-Huthi. Yemeni forces killed him in 2004 during an arrest attempt ending the first round of fighting.⁶⁷

Government repression went in full force in 2005. Security forces arrested hundreds of BY members, replaced Zaydi preachers with Salafists across Yemen, banned

⁶¹ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14.

⁶² Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

⁶³ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 249.

⁶⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 6–7.

⁶⁵ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 249.

⁶⁶ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 107; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 17.

⁶⁷ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 159, 249.

the main Zaydi holiday al-Ghadir, and confiscated all Zaydi related texts found.⁶⁸ Many of the Riyadh-funded Salafist preachers openly called Zaydis heretics and apostates in the former Zaydi mosques.⁶⁹ Approximately 35 percent of Yemen's population, or nine million citizens, found their religion essentially outlawed by the state.⁷⁰ The Yemeni government eventually backtracked, and the religious practices were re-legalized in 2008.⁷¹ While the state may have thought these policies would crush the blossoming insurgency, it failed to take into account that one of the key tenants of Zaydism is according to Winter, is the “willingness to rise up against injustice and oppression.”⁷²

Badr al-Din al-Huthi's son, Adb al Malik al-Huthi (who now leads), took the opportunity to rise up against the unjust Yemeni government, leading an armed faction of BY—the Huthis. He is said to command 7000 fighters.⁷³ The Huthis and government continued to fight off and on from 2005 until 2008, with four rounds of fighting taking place during this time frame.⁷⁴ The sixth and fiercest round started in November 2009. The Huthi fighters held off the combined might of the Yemeni military and Saudi Arabian forces that opened a second front in the north. The Huthis, who started as a grass roots Qur'anic study group, turned into a fighting force that is viewed as invincible on the Arabian Peninsula.⁷⁵

The Arab Spring provided an opportunity that the Huthis could not pass up. After government snipers shot into crowds of unarmed protestors in the capital, the government went into chaos with numerous defections. With President Saleh's attention in the capital, Huthi forces were able to seize full control over most of Sadah governorate and bordering areas. The Huthis also took the opportunity to increase its pan-Yemen legitimacy by creating a political alliance with the Revolutionary Youth (student protestors) and the

⁶⁸ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 249.

⁶⁹ Terrill, *Conflict in Yemen*, 17.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Yemen International Religious Freedom Report*, 2.

⁷¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 66.

⁷² Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14.

⁷³ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15.

⁷⁴ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 103–4.

⁷⁵ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14.

Hirak. The Huthis also created a front political party, Hizab al-Umma. These moves during the Arab Spring gave the Huthis a shadow government in Sadah, a national pan-Yemeni informal opposition bloc, and a formal political party.⁷⁶

At the start of the Arab Spring the Huthis were forced to articulate a clear political platform.⁷⁷ The Arab Spring saw the political goals of three groups overlap, the Huthis, the Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth.⁷⁸ The Arab Spring recruits to the Huthi cause were young, urban, and educated. This urban Huthi base allied with the Hirak and Revolutionary Youth in opposition to the CCG transition plan.⁷⁹ This new liberal base advocated “Huthi positions” at the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which also gave them a legitimate national and international voice.⁸⁰ These Huthis wanted a federal democratic government with check and balances, political pluralism, and freedom of religion. Yemeni critics charge that the Huthis are repressive in areas under its control and do not live up to its so-called ideals.⁸¹

The most recent opportunity arose in 2014. Clashes arose this time between the Huthis and AQAP and an anti-Huthi alliance comprised of allied bloc of Salafists, the Ahmar family,⁸² Islah,⁸³ and Brig. General Ali Muhsin and his 301 Military Brigade. The Huthis found new allies with former President Saleh and his General People’s Congress (GPC). The Huthis and its allies defeated its enemies and gained popular support through implementing security, and law and order in areas under its control.⁸⁴ As fighting raged to the north of the capital, the Huthis mobilized supports to protest the removal of fuel

⁷⁶ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14–6.

⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, “The Huthis: From Saada to Sana,” Middle East Report no. 154 (2014): 2, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/yemen/154-the-huthis-from-saada-to-sanaa.aspx>.

⁷⁸ Winter. “Ansar of Yemen.”

⁷⁹ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.

⁸⁰ The NDC is a representative committee, with multiple stakeholders, tasked with finding solutions to the government problems and writing a new constitution. <http://www.ndc.ye/default.aspx>; International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 2.

⁸¹ International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” i.

⁸² The Amhars are Heads of the Hasid tribal confederation.

⁸³ Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood.

⁸⁴ International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 3–4.

subsidies and called for the government to resign.⁸⁵ Brig. General Ali Muhsin's soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah clashed with protestors. Huthi fighters responded to attack, defeating both parties after large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis against the Ali Muhsin-Islah alliance. The Huthis forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. The Huthis included the Hirak in the spoils, as it is also a signatory.⁸⁶

3. Mobilizing Structures

How did the BY and later the Huthi movement mobilize support for its cause? To help answer that question I will examine another SMT variable, mobilizing structures. The main BY mobilizing structures are religious education, youth study groups, and holiday gatherings.

The initial informal mobilizing structure was the increased teaching of Zaydi doctrine, which increased the Zaydi collective identity amongst the youth. The 1990s saw a broadening of the base of students. Previously dominated by Hashemites and other *sada*⁸⁷, teaching was opened to non-*sada*. Texts and pamphlets were also distributed to a newly literate youth along with audiocassettes for the masses. Zaydi primary schools and “scientific schools” were established by wealthy Zaydis and the al-Haqq party. Leaders of the movement established a new formal school for teaching the new *ulama*.⁸⁸ Pro-Zaydi teachers used Zaydi materials in state schools. The increased focus on Zaydi

⁸⁵ “Call for Houthi civil disobedience in Yemen,” Al Jazeera (In English), Last updated: 31 Aug 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/call-houthi-civil-disobedience-yemen-2014831212127650924.html>.

⁸⁶ Mohammed Ghobari, “Houthi tighten grip on Yemen capital after swift capture, power-sharing deal,” Reuters, September 22, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/22/us-yemen-security-idUSKCN0HH2BQ20140922?rpc=932>; International Crisis Group, “Yemen, October 1, 2014,” <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx?CountryIDs=%7b9D2149C0-C350-40FC-BE12-7693FB454AEE%7d#results>; “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government,” AFP; “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” al Jazeera (In English), Last updated: 13 Oct 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/new-yemeni-prime-minister-appointed-20141013112111586298.html>

⁸⁷ *sada* —plural of sayyid. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xxiv.

⁸⁸ *Ulama* (‘alim sing.) – religious scholars. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xxi

education helped foster a sense of Zaydi community and collective identity among the youth.⁸⁹

In addition to mass religious education efforts, a study group was founded by the al-Houthi family, the Believing Youth. Initially the apolitical group was more of an after school club, with studies, sports, and field trips. The BY innovated, departing radically from northern Yemeni (and Zaydi) tradition by practicing equality between Hashemites, *sada*, merchants, nontribal townsfolk, and tribal students.⁹⁰ This helped draw youth that would otherwise be attracted to the Salafists for their relatively egalitarian ideology. By the mid-1990s, the BY had established 50 clubs across Sadah and other governorates.⁹¹ As the BY gained popularity, it started a summer camp, that at its height served 15,000 youth. Much like the after school club, the camp featured religious study with sports and drama classes.⁹²

The expanded Zaydi schools and BY after school clubs and camps were noted for the modern mode of association and activism. According to Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, the Huthis had helped shed the old hierarchical sociocultural structure by providing an “entirely new associational space for young Zaydis.”⁹³ The BY built a support base across social classes in Sadah that the government failed to do.⁹⁴ In the 1990s, the BY were able to create a large base of support among teenagers that would later be called upon to support collective action, including protests and calls to arms in the 2000s. During the protests against the War in Iraq and the Arab Spring, the movement attracted additional followers because it provided an outlet of expression against the regime.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 96–7.

⁹⁰ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 98–9, 101.

⁹¹ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

⁹² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 98–9.

⁹³ Ibid., 100.

⁹⁴ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

⁹⁵ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.

The Huthis used large Id al-Ghadir gatherings as rallies for Zaydi revivalism.⁹⁶ Id al-Ghadir is the day that Muhammad appointed Ali as his successor according to Shia tradition. The holiday was celebrated in Huthi controlled territory after it was outlawed in early 2000s. The outlawing Id al-Ghadir backfired on the ROY, because when the holiday was re-legalized in 2008 large celebrations were held across Yemen where Shafi’is, Isma’ilis, and Zaydis joined together in solidarity against oppression. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells state that, “Husayn al-Huthi’s use of these holidays to decry [ROY] actions and mobilize supporters illustrates his calculations and highlights the local friction between Zaydis and Wahhabis [Salafists], as well as between Zaydis and the state.”⁹⁷ Recent videos of the holiday show tens of thousands gathered to see current Huthi leader ‘Adb al-Malik al-Huthi indoctrinate and mobilize his supporters.⁹⁸

4. Cultural Framing

The BY, and later the Huthis, framed different situations as they arose. Some frames came and went—but that is expected from a group that started out playing soccer after school to fighting an armed conflict. The main Huthi frames are: appeal to Yemeni tradition, revival of Zaydism, freedom of religion, access to government funds for development, and most importantly the defense of the community. Mao argues that political goals are more important than military goals in a revolution.⁹⁹ That is also true for a counter-revolution and the Yemeni government has actively engaged in framing contests with the Huthis. I will also include the government’s framing contests in this section.

Before I examine the main frames I want to address the Huthi slogan: “Allahu Akbar! Death to America! Death of Israel! Curse the Jews! Victory for Islam!”¹⁰⁰ According to Winter, the slogan aligns with Husayn al-Huthi’s message of “sharp political criticism of both local and international actors, crafting a historically rooted

⁹⁶ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106.

⁹⁷ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 116.

⁹⁸ Ibid., xxii, 66, 116, 218.

⁹⁹ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 43.

¹⁰⁰ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 15.

discourse of justice and empowerment.”¹⁰¹ This “bumper sticker” version of the Huthi grievances is chanted in the mosques after Friday prayers and at various anti-government and anti-war protests.¹⁰² Despite the rather clear attacks on America and Israel, the slogan is meant as a criticism of President Saleh and his “alliance” with America. The chant sums up the Huthi conspiracy theory of an “American-Jewish-Sunni” alliance against Zaydis.¹⁰³ Notwithstanding its overt slogans, the Huthis have not conducted a terrorist attack against U.S. or Israeli interests, or against the tiny Jewish population in Yemen.¹⁰⁴ The Huthi fight is against the Yemeni government and the Salafists.

The use of the incendiary slogan gave the ROY government an easy way to contest the frame by claiming the Huthis are violent, radical, terrorists.¹⁰⁵ By linking the group in 2003 to the global war on terror, the government also justifies its brutal counterinsurgency to the rest of the country and world.¹⁰⁶ The government’s framing is not overly convincing since the Huthi attacks have only targeted ROY and KSA military and government targets and rival militias. The international community, including the U.S., has pressured the Yemeni government to make peace with the Huthis and focus on real terrorists such as AQAP, suggesting that outsiders disagree with the “terrorist” label.¹⁰⁷

The encroachment of the Salafists in the Zaydi heartland has been met with two different, yet related frames by the BY and later Huthis. First, the Zaydis have framed the

¹⁰¹Ibid., 14.

¹⁰² Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 107.

¹⁰³ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 119; Ben Anderson, “VICE on HBO Debrief: The Enemy of My Enemy,” *VICE News*, YouTube video, May 16, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGiPec_L0vo#t=164.

¹⁰⁴ RAND Corporation, “Conflict in Yemen Fueled by Tribalism, Religious Conflicts,” News Release, May 3 2010, <http://www.rand.org/news/press/2010/05/03.html>; Joost R. Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 16, 2009, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65730/joost-r-hiltermann/disorder-on-the-border>.

¹⁰⁵ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 124.

¹⁰⁷ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 21, 23. IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Updated, August 6, 2014, 6, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1320928&Pubabbrev=JWIT>.

“foreign” Saudi Salafists as attacking the traditional Zaydi religion.¹⁰⁸ Second, the Zaydis framed the attack in secular terms, arguing that it is a form of Saudi imperialism.¹⁰⁹ The revivalists are acting in a reactionary fashion by urging for the return to the historical practices of the 1000-year Zaydi regime. The frames resonated with the population since they were the driving factors in the creation of the Zaydi revivalist social movement, which was highly popular.¹¹⁰ The Huthis are proclaiming a return to the true northern Yemeni traditions in which Zaydis were in power, an appealing frame for currently powerless Zaydis.

The Yemeni government started a framing contest on political-religious grounds after the 2003 protests. The government claimed that the Huthi family, of the old royal Hashemite clan, wanted to reinstate the old Imamate and create a theocratic state.¹¹¹ The Huthis have not made such proclamations and stated its allegiance to the Republican system, the laws of the country, and the constitution. Since Badr al-Din al-Huthi qualified as an Imam (all he had to do was proclaim it), it seems reasonable that he would have if he wanted proclaim a new imamate. The government has also accused the Huthis of being under “foreign” influence by allying with Iran, Hezbollah, Libya, Iraq, and Eritrea. With the exception of matériel from Iran, Yemen has provided no evidence of foreign assistance. The ROY government also accused the Huthis of converting to the “foreign” Twelver (Shia) Islam, and that Husayn al-Huthi claimed he was the *Mahdi*.¹¹² Husayn al-Huthi complained about Twelvers trying to convert Zaydis and Zaydis do not believe in the *Mahdi* so these claims probably did little to drive Zaydis from the cause.¹¹³

Similar to the demands of its current allies in the Hirak, the Huthis demand the end of corruption and government abuses, enfranchisement, equal access to government

¹⁰⁸ Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 23.

¹⁰⁹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 95.

¹¹⁰ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 96–98.

¹¹¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 23; Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 102; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 17.

¹¹² The *Madhi*—Messianic figure in some Islamic sects. Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 108–9.

¹¹³ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 112.

funds, freedom of religion, equality, and rule of law.¹¹⁴ ROY did not address or acknowledge the issues until the Arab Spring protests which the Huthis strongly supported. The Huthis, Revolutionary Youth and Hirak boycotted the one-man election and post-Saleh transition.¹¹⁵

The most powerful frame uses the Zaydi cultural practice of the duty of a Muslim to rebel against an unjust ruler. The Huthis have portrayed the fight as a defense against the heavy-handed ROY military.¹¹⁶ The death and destruction wrought by the ROY military validates the Huthi's claims. The fighting in Sadah displaced 300,000 residences, destroyed 9,000 structures, and killed 25,000.¹¹⁷ The ROY counter-framed the battle as fighting an outlaw group engaged in open rebellion, allied with foreign elements—Iran and Hezbollah—intent on creation of a new Zaydi state.¹¹⁸

5. Conclusion

The BY/Huthi movement started as a community in the northern Yemen. Through the framing of grievances after the liberalization of the political system Zaydi elites were able to mobilize through educational, social, and religious networks. Through the creation of the political party and Believing Youth Club tens of thousands of Zaydis were able to express their discontent with the system through the political process, and more importantly through contentious collective action in the form of protests and disruptive activities. The ROY's repression strengthened the movement with tens of thousands supporting the thousands of Huthi fighters defending its territory. During the Arab Spring, the Huthi movement created pan-Yemeni allies with groups holding similar grievances, including the Revolutionary Youth and the Hirak. The widespread displeasure with the Yemeni government even led to Shafi'is, Isma'ilis, and Zaydis to join together to celebrate a Shia holiday.

¹¹⁴ Novak, "Comparative Counterinsurgency," 14–5; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 17.

¹¹⁵ Winter, "Wake of the Arab Spring," 16–7.

¹¹⁶ Winter, "Conflict in Yemen," 102, 106.

¹¹⁷ Novak, "Comparative Counterinsurgency," 16; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Winter, "Conflict in Yemen," 102.

The Huthi militia was borne out of repression, and was thus a creation of ROY's actions. It is too soon to tell if the Huthis will use the power sharing agreement to disarm and fully engage in the Yemeni political system or to continue as a militant group. Regardless, the Huthis experienced remarkable growth as a social movement deftly utilizing political opportunities as they arose; framing that resonates with the populace, and used a variety of mobilizing structures.

C. AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

“Since 1990 when the Americans occupied the land of revelation, the youth of the Peninsula of Islam are defending their religion, their holy places and their land, from which, their Messenger, peace be upon him, ordered [his followers] to expel the unbelievers. They have executed a few operations against the Americans in and out of the Arabian Peninsula. The most famous are the Ulaya, al-Khobar, East Riyadh, *USS Cole*, *Limburg*, and the assassination of U.S. soldiers in the island of Faylakah in Kuwait. The leaders of al-Qa`ida such as Shaykh al-Battar Yusuf al-`Uyairi, `Abdul `Aziz al-Miqrin, and Shaykh Abu `Ali al-Harithi and others led this war against the Americans in and outside of the Arabian Peninsula.”¹¹⁹

— Nasir Al-Wuhayshi

This section explains the development of the Jihadi-Salafism in Yemen movement starting with the return of the Afghan-Arabs¹²⁰ through the formation of the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Arab Spring. The group known as AQAP originated in 2009 with the announcement of the merger of the Yemeni Al Qaeda in the Southern Arabian Peninsula (AQSAQ)¹²¹ and the Saudi Arabian Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.¹²² AQAP soon after commenced a full-blown insurgency in southern Yemen. The Jihadi-Salafism movement in Yemen is not a simple liner development but ebbed and followed depending on political opportunities and threats.

¹¹⁹ Nasir Al-Wuhayshi, “Interview with Shaykh Abu Basir,” *Inspire* 1 (12 July 2010), 13.

¹²⁰ Afghan-Arabs—Arab volunteer veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

¹²¹ Popularly called Al Qaeda in Yemen.

¹²² Popularly called Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Jonathan Masters and Zachary Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP),” *Backgrounders*, Council on Foreign Relations, last updated August 22, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/yemen/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap/p9369>.

1. Origins and Ideologies

Jihadi-Salafism is the ideology that spawned AQAP, so the religious ideology needs explanation. Jihadi-Salafism's main goal is to rally Muslims to defend other Muslims around the world from perceived non-Muslim aggression.¹²³ Jihadi-Salafism is a fusion of two ideologies the first being Salafism which Gilles Kepel describes as, “a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas. It advocated a return to the traditions of the devout ancestor (*salaf* in Arabic).” Kepel further notes that modern (neo-) Salafists believe that the Quran and Hadith were to be understood in the most traditional and literal interpretation. The Salafi-Jihadists add the requirement of absolute dedication to Jihad.¹²⁴ Mohammed M. Hafez finds Jihadi-Salafism “characterized by five features.” First, they believe in the unity of God (*tawhid*) or monotheism. Second, Jihadi-Salafists accentuate Allah’s sovereignty (*hakimiyyat Allah*) over everything. Third, the Jihadi-Salafists denounce any innovations (*bida*) to Islam as violations to Allah’s unity or sovereignty. Fourth, Jihadi-Salafists may excommunicate (*takfir*) any Muslim they believe violated the faith by “the heart, tongue and action.” Someone who is thus judged to be *kafir* is an apostate or infidel. Finally, Jihadi-Salafism emphasizes the importance of a classic, early Islam definition of jihad to the faith. Muslims must wage jihad against infidel and apostate regimes.¹²⁵

The movement in Yemen has at times fused their Jihadi-Salafism with another ideology called revolutionary Islamism. Hafez defines revolutionary Islam as an ideology that

seeks to transform the existing political order in any given state or national government through mass mobilization or violent activism. Revolutionary

¹²³ Mohammed M. Hafez, “Illegitimate Governance: The Roots of Islamist Radicalization in the MENA,” in *Governance in Middle East and North Africa: A Handbook*, ed. Abbas Kadhim (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 94.

¹²⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Anthony F. Roberts (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 219–220.

¹²⁵ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 64–70.

Islamists target their own governments and societies in order to overthrow the secular system and establish an Islamic order in its place.¹²⁶

Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula-Saudi Arabia (AQAP-SA), AQASAP and the combined AQAP drifted towards a hybrid Jihadi-Salafism/revolutionary Islamism ideology that resulted in attacks on Muslims and non-Muslims.¹²⁷ This hybridization was met with some controversy as some Jihadists objected to targeting the Yemeni or Saudi government while Americans were in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is a clear case for defensive Jihad in those lands. Even ordinary Muslims could not understand the reasoning. According to Gregory D. Johnsen, “if al Qaeda wanted to kill Americans, they wondered, why didn’t they go to Iraq?”¹²⁸ Al Qaeda lost popular support after attacking Muslims inside Saudi Arabia and Yemen.¹²⁹

2. Political Opportunity Structures

The Jihadi-Salafists seized several political opportunities and responded to several threats that aided in mobilizing supporters in the past two-and-a-half decades. The noteworthy political opportunities and threats include the Yemeni state sponsored Afghan-Arab Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY); the 1994 Civil War that used IJY units in the Aden campaign; the creation of the Aden Abyan Islamic Army in reaction to government threats; the permissive atmosphere that allowed al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) to operate; the Yemeni and American crackdown after the *USS Cole* bombing and 9/11; the 2006 prison break that revived al Qaeda and the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi branches in AQAP; and finally, the Arab Spring and AQAP’s emergence as an insurgent group.

The story of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula starts much in the same way as the original bin Laden led al Qaeda, with the end of the Soviet War in Afghanistan. Starting in the late 1980s, the returning Afghan-Arabs, who had converted to Jihadi-Salafism,

¹²⁶ Hafez, “Illegitimate Governance,” 94.

¹²⁷ Thomas Hegghammer, “The Ideological Hybridization of Jihadi Groups,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 9 (2009), 33–5; Michael Page, Lara Challita and Alistair Harris, “Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Framing Narratives and Prescriptions,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23 (March 2011), 155–6.

¹²⁸ Johnsen, *Last Refugee*, 143, 198, 210.

¹²⁹ IHS Jane’s, “AQAP),” 6; Johnsen, *Last Refugee*, 197, 225.

where repatriated by President Saleh in North Yemen (YAR). President Saleh used the Afghan-Arabs to wage jihad against the “godless” Soviet-backed Marxist People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).¹³⁰ Osama bin Laden reportedly diverted funds, arms, and men to assist in the cause.¹³¹ Soon thereafter, the two Yemens united to form the Republic of Yemen (ROY). Tariq al-Fadhli, a bin Laden associate, returned to his home in Zinjibar where his grandfather was once Sultan. Encouraged by President Saleh and Osama bin Laden, al-Fadhli and fighters loyal to bin Laden took advantage of the political opportunity and formed the Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY).¹³² With presidential backing, the IJY started assassinating former and current officials in the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP).¹³³ IJY’s first attack against the “far” enemy¹³⁴ occurred in 1992, with the bombing of two hotels in Aden housing American troops transiting to Somalia. The attacks resulted in the deaths of two Yemenis and one Australian and the arrest of al-Fadhli.¹³⁵ The ISY continued its attacks on socialists in the south, but would find greater opportunity with the 1994 Civil War.

The 1994 Civil War broke out when southern YSP leaders, having “buyers regret,” attempted to secede from the northern dominated ROY. During the 10 week civil war the ROY forces crushed the rebels.¹³⁶ To accomplish its victory, the ROY government freed al-Fadhli and made him a colonel in charge of the thousands IJY irregulars known as the Second Army Brigade. The bearded and undisciplined Afghan-Arabs, tribesmen, and Islamists ransacked Aden, destroying western, socialist, and “un-Islamic” buildings. Shariah law was implemented and floggings ensued. Forces looted

¹³⁰ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 1; Sheila Carapico, “Yemen and the Aden Abyan Islamic Army,” Middle East Research and Information Project, October 18, 2000. <http://merip.org/mero/mero101800>.

¹³¹ Peter Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I Know* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 109.

¹³² Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 156–163; W. Andrew Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 22.

¹³³ IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 30–31.

¹³⁴ The “near enemy” is the local regime while the “far enemy” is Western, Saudi, and Israeli regimes. Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 29–30.

¹³⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 23; Hull, *High-Value Target*, xxviii.

¹³⁶ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 8; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 163–164.

everything from garbage trucks to door knobs.¹³⁷ Aden was soon brought under government control and the IJY was dissolved. Former IJY members returned home or were rewarded with jobs in the military, security forces, or civil government.¹³⁸ The IJY involvement in the war had two lasting effects. First, many southerners still bear a grudge against bin Laden (and al Qaeda) because of his role as a financer of IJY (\$20 million total).¹³⁹ Second, the “selling out” of most of the IJY members lead to the creation of the more radical Aden Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA).¹⁴⁰

Feeling betrayed and threatened by the YAR government, the AAIA was founded by another Afghan-Arab, Abu Hassan al-Mihdar, notorious London-based Finsbury Mosque Imam Abu Hamza al-Misri, and a small number of Jihadi-Salafists in 1994. With the threats from old socialists gone, the ROY government deported 14,000 Afghan-Arabs. Others departed on their own to fight in the Afghan Civil War, Bosnia, Somalia, Tajikistan or Chechnya. The early al Qaeda affiliate was mostly a failure. The group attacked mostly civilians, while avoiding Yemeni security and Western hard targets. The killing of nuns and tourists starting in 1998 led to a swift crackdown with most of the group killed or arrested by Yemeni forces by 1999.¹⁴¹ AAIA were blamed for the bombing of the *USS Cole* in 2000, an act carried out by a far more dangerous group, al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY).¹⁴²

AQY started as more of an al Qaeda cell than an affiliate when it was founded in 1998. Osama bin Laden called Yemen the “near ideal jihadi sanctuary.”¹⁴³ The cell, led by Qaid Sinan al-Harithi, provided support for bin Laden’s bombing of the U.S.

¹³⁷ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 161, 164, 144.

¹³⁸ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 23; Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, ed., *A False Foundation: AQAP, Tribes and Ungoverned Spaces in Yemen* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2011), 23.

¹³⁹ Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 162; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 23.

¹⁴¹ Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 166–9; Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 26–7, 30; Carapico, “Aden Abyan Islamic Army.”

¹⁴² Carapico, “Aden Abyan Islamic Army;” Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 2.

¹⁴³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 22.

embassies in Tanzania and Kenya before carrying out its first (successful)¹⁴⁴ attack with the infamous *USS Cole* bombing.¹⁴⁵ The bombing had immediate blowback when skyrocketing insurance rates kept many ships out of Aden.¹⁴⁶ While the attack, coupled with 9/11, helped with recruitment it did not achieve mass popular support bin Laden craved.¹⁴⁷ The final major attack by AQY was on the French oil tanker *MV Limburg*, a maritime suicide operation that killed one.¹⁴⁸ The maritime bombings and 9/11 soon ended the permissive environment enjoyed by AQY. Soon thereafter the ROY and the U.S. coordinated a quick decapitation campaign.

Less than a month after the October 2002 *MV Limburg* bombing, an air strike killed AQY leader al-Harithi.¹⁴⁹ The decapitation campaign involving the U.S., Yemen and, other Arab countries, succeed in arresting all of AQY's leaders, and detained dozens of members by 2004.¹⁵⁰ Foreign jihadists, 600 in total, were arrested and deported by the end of 2002.¹⁵¹ The campaign destroyed AQY, and al Qaeda was not heard from again until 2006.¹⁵² During the same period, the Brigadier General Ali Muhsin encouraged jihadists to fight in Iraq.¹⁵³ While imprisoning radicals and sending fighters to Iraq created calm in Yemen, it proved to be the calm before the storm.

Al Qaeda in the lands of Yemen (AQLY) was born in a Political Organization (PSO) prison. The imprisoned members of AQY and other radicals started clandestine study circles. The group, led by Nasir al-Wuhayshi, studied the Quran and Jihadi-

¹⁴⁴ A previous maritime suicide operation on the *USS Sullivan* failed when the boat carrying the bombs sank before reaching its target. IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 32.

¹⁴⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 24; IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 2.

¹⁴⁶ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 108.

¹⁴⁷ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 107; Lawrence Wright, *Looming Tower* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 331.

¹⁴⁸ IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 39; Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 111–2, 116–9.

¹⁴⁹ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 122–3; Hull, *High-Value Target*, 61.

¹⁵⁰ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 35; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 25.

¹⁵¹ Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 223.

¹⁵² Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 35; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 25.

¹⁵³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 25; Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 227.

Salafism doctrine, and recruited dozens of other prisoners.¹⁵⁴ The setting was nearly perfect for radicalization and recruitment; prisoners were isolated from outside society, imprisoned without trial and had nothing better to do than talk. A. Dalgaard-Nielsen notes, “group bonding and peer pressure reinforce[s] the emerging commitment of the joiner,” and small groups create more radical views.¹⁵⁵ In 2006, nearly two dozen men escaped the prison. Soon after, six were killed and 11 were captured, but the remaining six made up the new leadership of AQLY. Its ranks were swelled with returning Iraq veterans. A year later in 2007, members of AQAP-SA started fleeing from Saudi forces into Yemen.¹⁵⁶ The rechristened al Qaeda in the South Arabian Peninsula (AQASAP) started targeting western and Yemeni targets.¹⁵⁷ In 2009, the remaining Saudis merged its branch with the Yemeni one becoming AQAP. A series of failed terrorist operations followed.¹⁵⁸

The next political opportunity for AQAP came in early 2011, when the Arab Spring protests weakened and destabilized the ROY government.¹⁵⁹ AQAP decided to upgrade from terrorist tactics to a full blown insurgency. It wanted to rule territory so in April 2011, it created a front organization (or possibly an insurgent wing) called Ansar al Shariah (ASY). AQAP religious chief Sheikh Abu Zubayr Adil bin Abdullah al-Abab explained the rebranding, “the name Ansar al Shariah is what we use to introduce

¹⁵⁴ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 160–5.

¹⁵⁵ Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 802–803. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2010.501423>.

¹⁵⁶ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 25–6.

¹⁵⁷ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 36; Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 206.

¹⁵⁸ The failed terrorist attacks, while important for counterterrorism studies, are not really relevant for the SMT study. These attacks include the August 2009 Rectum-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attack on Saudi Prince Nayef, the attempted Christmas 2009 Underwear-Borne IED bombing of a passenger plane, and the October 2010 attempted Fed-Ex Printer-Borne IED attack. A concise history can be found in: Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” <http://www.cfr.org/yemen/al-qaeda-arabian-peninsula-aqap/p9369>.

¹⁵⁹ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4.

ourselves in areas where we work to tell people about our work and goals.”¹⁶⁰ The rebranding was required after AQAP’s seizure of the town Lawder in August 2010. During the short reign, locals reported heavy indoctrination and the enforcement of a brutal version of shariah that included, according to Terrill, “crucifixions, public beheadings, amputations, and floggings.” The indoctrination was not enough to convince the population to accept AQAP as its rulers, and the populace soon sided with the government forces. After the government drove AQAP out of Lawder, residents formed an armed militia called a Popular Committee that fought alongside the military during the Second Battle of Lawder.¹⁶¹

After the second loss in Lawder, AQAP looked southward to Jaar and Zinjibar. “ASY” seized the towns from the government weakened by the Arab Spring in March and May 2011 respectively. The jihadists had mobilized hundreds of fighters after the two brief battles of Lawder. The closest reinforcements were loyal to Brig. General Ali Muhsin who had sided with the protestors against President Saleh and refused to help. In Jaar, away from the front lines in Zinjibar, AQAP won over support by constructing water lines and an electrical grid. Only after U.S. and Saudi support and pressure did Ali Muhsin’s men intervene.¹⁶² In May 2012, ROY forces 20,000 strong and backed by Popular Committees started a counter-offensive and by June 2012 retook the towns. Before fleeing, ASY mined the perimeter of Jaar, which resulted in the deaths of 81 residents. A suicide bomber later killed 45 members of the Jaar Popular Committees.
¹⁶³ What little good will AQAP/ASY earned in Jaar and Zinjibar was lost with attacks on the population.

¹⁶⁰ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, x, 3. The use of “Y” in ASY is due to the fact that at least different six groups use the name. The last letter is the group’s geographic location, ie. ASB is Ansar al Shariah in Benghazi, Libya. Aaron Y. Zelin, “Know your Ansar al-Sharia,” *Foreign Policy* (Blog), published September 12, 2012, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/21/know_your_ansar_al_sharia.

¹⁶¹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–7; Casey L. Coombs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias to Maintain Stability in Abyan Province,” *CTC Sentinel* 6 no. 2 (February 2013): 5.

¹⁶² Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 271–2, 276–82; Terrill *Struggle for Yemen*, 30.

¹⁶³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 46–51.

The Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists' use of political opportunities and structures did little to gain mass support for the movement. The movement also made mistakes from the sacking of Aden to the reappraisals on the citizens of Jaar that hurt its standing in Yemen.

3. Mobilizing Structures

How did the Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists mobilize support its cause? After all, Jihad is a high risk form of activism. The main Yemeni Jihadi-Salafists' mobilizing structures are the mosque, the tribe and social ties, later the Internet, and at one point the state.¹⁶⁴

Proselytization and preaching is a prerequisite to recruitment. A majority of Yemenis practice the Shafi'i (Sunni) school of jurisprudence while in northern highlands Zaydi (Shia) Islam makes up a significant minority.¹⁶⁵ The large majority of non-Salafi Muslims presents a challenge in the realm of recruiting. The individual must convert to Salafism before they would consider joining the Jihadi-Salafists. Salafist proselytization started in the 1970s financed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Some Yemenis relate the spread of Salafism as a form of Saudi imperialism.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, the spread of the new ideology has stoked sectarian tensions in Yemen since the Salafists oppose both the Zaydis and Shafi'is. Salafists established or took over schools, study groups, and mosques.¹⁶⁷ Johnsen found that by the late nineties at least 600,000 Yemenis had graduated from private Salafist religious institutions.¹⁶⁸ Salafists also gained key positions in state schools and were able teach its version of Islam.¹⁶⁹ After conversion, the Jihadi-Salafists must also compete with Islah, the Islamist political party, for followers. The party allows for a legal outlet for opposition to the Yemen ruling coalition, the General People's Congress (GPC).¹⁷⁰ Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz find that "many studies have substantiated the claim that the more

¹⁶⁴ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 7–8.

¹⁶⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Yemen International Religious Freedom Report*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 219–220.

¹⁶⁷ Weir, "A Clash of Fundamentalisms," 22–3.

¹⁶⁸ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 56–7.

¹⁶⁹ Weir, "Clash of Fundamentalisms," 22.

¹⁷⁰ IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 16.

accessible the state, even an authoritarian state, the less likely the opposition will coalesce around a violent strategy,” further weakening recruiting efforts for the Jihadists.¹⁷¹ Proselytizing and conversions to the Salafism are not enough to mobilize people to join the Jihadi-Salafists, but the process can be viewed as a prerequisite to mobilization in Yemen. Jihadi-Salafists must also radicalize while recruiting and mobilizing followers.

The mosque and study groups are important sources of radicalization and recruitment. During the 1980s clerics across the country preached jihad against the Soviet Union, some telling stories of angels fighting alongside the *mujahedeen*. Afghan-Arabs were important in creating IJY, AAIA, and AQY.¹⁷² Later Johnsen found that Jihadi-Salafists clerics would preach wherever they could, to include “unfinished mosques...and in tiny back rooms of sympathetic shopkeepers.”¹⁷³ These mosques and study groups also created what McAdam calls “extensive ties to other participants” required for high-risk activism.¹⁷⁴

The second source of recruitment is Yemeni tribes. In the Soviet War in Afghanistan era, tribal sheikhs helped channel members to Afghanistan.¹⁷⁵ During the 1994 Civil War southern tribesmen joined the IJY, although it appears the tribesmen motivation may have been out of greed or revenge against the YSP. Most quit IJY when the war was over.¹⁷⁶ A 2011 Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) report argues that al Qaeda’s transnational pan-Islamic ideology is a weakness, since tribes are concerned with local issues and jihadist ideology alienates them from broad-based tribal support in Yemen.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, one of AQ’s main goals according to Abu Bakr Naji’s *The*

¹⁷¹ Mohammed M. Hafez and Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement” in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 66.

¹⁷² Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 1.

¹⁷³ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 5–8.

¹⁷⁴ McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism,” 64.

¹⁷⁵ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 7–8.

¹⁷⁶ Clark, *Heads of Snakes*, 165; Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 22–26.

¹⁷⁷ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 9–12.

Management of Savagery, is the elimination of tribes.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the Huthis who ally with tribes, AQAP rule would subordinate the tribal leadership, which goes against tribal interests and would likely lead to armed conflict between the tribes and AQAP.¹⁷⁹ These two factors probably limit tribal recruitment which is reflected in a CTC study which finds most members of AQAP do not have links to tribes in AQAP's area of operations.¹⁸⁰

Another channel of mobilizing fighters included, at various times, the Yemeni Government. During the war in Afghanistan, Brig. General Ali Muhsin recruited jihadists for Osama bin Laden.¹⁸¹ As previously stated, the government employed IYJ during the 1994 Civil War.¹⁸² Ali Muhsin also funneled an estimated 2000 jihadists into Iraq starting in 2003.¹⁸³ Novak accuses Ali Muhsin of hiring "jihadi mercenaries during the Sadah War against the Huthi rebels," but the current state of war with AQAP and change in ROY leadership has probably closed the door on government mobilization.¹⁸⁴

Other minor mobilizing structures included training camps and propaganda magazines. While camps can be used to further radicalize and indoctrinate recruits, the remote and clandestine nature of the camps suggests that recruits have already chosen the path to jihad before arrival. The camps primarily provide military and terrorist tactical training to recruits and due to air strikes are now small and temporary.¹⁸⁵ Al Qaeda has produced multiple propaganda magazines and treatises on the Internet to mobilize supporters and more importantly frame issues.¹⁸⁶ Michael Page, Lara Challita, and

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 15–8.

¹⁷⁹ Sarah Philips, "What Comes Next in Yemen?: Al-Qaeda the Tribes, and State-Building," in *Yemen on the Brink*, ed. Christopher Boucek and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 79–80.

¹⁸⁰ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 138–9.

¹⁸¹ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 7; Novak, "Comparative Counterinsurgency," 18–19.

¹⁸² Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 161, 164, 144.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 227.

¹⁸⁴ Novak, "Comparative Counterinsurgency," 18–19.

¹⁸⁵ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 129, 264.

¹⁸⁶ Alistair Harris, "Exploiting Grievances: Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," in *Yemen on the Brink*, ed. Christopher Boucek and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 32.

Alistair Harris could not determine the extent to which the Internet is successful at mobilizing supporters. Only 2.5 percent of Yemenis have access to the Internet and only 50 percent are literate. Pamphleting and reading jihadi literature out loud at qat chews are other reported methods of distribution.¹⁸⁷

4. Cultural Framing

Jihadi-Salafists used several frames since the 1980s. Anti-communist frames were undoubtedly important early in the Jihadi-Salafism cause, but since communism is no longer an active cause I will focus on other frames. Additionally, IJY was noted for poor messaging.¹⁸⁸ The main Jihadi-Salafism frames in Yemen are: the Crusader-Zionist Alliance, the apostate YAR and KSA Governments, suffering, “tribal honor and deeply-felt religious sentiment,”¹⁸⁹ and jihad as the solution.

Alistair Harris’ analysis of al Qaeda’s publications,¹⁹⁰ the main source of its propaganda, finds that al Qaeda “provide both diagnostic and prognostic frameworks to mobilize followers and potential recruits into collective action.”¹⁹¹ Together, the frames integrate popular local and global grievances into a “single narrative” that proscribes jihad (and later an Islamic State) as the solution to the problem.¹⁹² Of course boiling down all grievances into one solution is not without risk. Opponents and competitors such as Hirak, Islah, the Revolutionary Youth, and tribes compete with al Qaeda’s prognostic frames. Additionally, trying to fuse local grievances into al Qaeda’s pan-

¹⁸⁷ Page, Challita and Harris, “AQAP: Framing Narratives,” 169; According to Varisco, “The daily chew serves as an important forum for socializing with one’s friends and neighbors, informal conduct of business, discussion of current events, dispute mediation and religious instruction. Students use the occasion to study together; poets actively seek inspiration while chewing.” Daniel Martin Varisco, “On the Meaning of Chewing: The Significance of Qat (*Catha edulis*) in the Yemen Arab Republic,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18, no. 1 (February 1986): 4–6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/162857>.

¹⁸⁸ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 26.

¹⁸⁹ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 36.

¹⁹⁰ The magazines *Mu’askar al Battar* (Terrorism and Insurgent Tactics), *Sawt al-Jihad* (Ideology), *Sada al-Malahim* (Terrorism and Insurgent Tactics & Ideology) and *Inspire* (English Language – Focus on Jihad in West). IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 14.

¹⁹¹ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 33.

¹⁹² Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 41; Page, Challita and Harris, “AQAP: Framing Narratives,” 163, 169.

Islamic agenda can lead to confusing messaging.¹⁹³ Jihad against the government of Yemen will not as Harris explains, “improve governmental responsiveness, accountability, service provision, or development,” which are the public’s main concerns.¹⁹⁴

The Crusader-Zionist Alliance, the apostate YAR and KSA governments, and suffering are linked. The Jihadi-Salafists in Yemen argue that Israel and the West support un-Islamic governments, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The failure of these governments to help their people or implement shariah law causes all the problems in the Muslim world. The propagandists further argue everything wrong in the world is due to the lack of the Islamic State. Individual local issues of suffering are used as examples of the effects of the Crusader-Zionist Alliance and apostate regimes. Palestine serves as a *cause célèbre* for the Jihadists.¹⁹⁵

Al Qaeda appeals to tribal honor and religion when framing issues.¹⁹⁶ Al Qaeda’s statements often praise, shame, or challenge tribes in order to rally them to the Jihadi-Salafist cause. The CTC found that the efforts to compel the tribes into action did little to win mass support of any tribe.¹⁹⁷ As explained in the background, religion is the main justification for the Jihadi-Salafist cause, and it integrated into all other frames. According to Page, Challita, and Harris, al Qaeda uses (Jihadi-Salafist) Islamic doctrine to “justify and legitimize its acts of violence” and to add religious credibly to the group.¹⁹⁸ Jihadi-Salafists appeal to fellow Muslims to fight for the cause.¹⁹⁹

Jihad is the solution.²⁰⁰ This “solution” to all the problems is further explained by *al-wala wa al-bara* (association and dissociation). According to Jihadi-Salafists, Muslims

¹⁹³ Philips, “*What Comes Next*,” 85.

¹⁹⁴ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 40.

¹⁹⁵ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 36; IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 14–5; Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 121.

¹⁹⁶ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 36; Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 125–34.

¹⁹⁷ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 125–34.

¹⁹⁸ Page, Challita and Harris, “AQAP: Framing Narratives,” 163, 169.

¹⁹⁹ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 37–8.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

must support the jihadists by resisting secularization (dissociation) and advocating for shariah (association).²⁰¹ Anyone, regardless of age, gender, or ability, is capable of support. In addition to fighters, according to AQAP founding member Qassem al-Raymi, the cause needs other professions including “educators, door-to-door salesmen, and farmers.”²⁰² Muslims must all withdraw support for apostate regimes.²⁰³

Page, Challita, and Harris argue that the grievances and diagnostic frameworks cited by Jihadi-Salafist groups often have a legitimate base, but the prognostic framework, jihad against the West and “apostate” regimes and establishment of a global Islamic state, is increasingly rejected by most Muslims.²⁰⁴ While Muslims have little love for the West, a large majority of Muslims dislike al Qaeda even more. The support of al Qaeda continues to fall, suggesting that the old cliché “actions speak louder than words” is true.²⁰⁵

5. Conclusion

AQAP has shown the capacity to mobilize thousands of young men to wage jihad in Yemen but lasting support was difficult to maintain. AQAP’s ability govern captured territory has thus far been limited. As a high-risk movement, AQAP relies on hybrid of local and pan-Islamic frames to mobilize support. The frames question the legitimacy and competency of Yemeni rule while highlighting the suffering of ordinary Muslims under the apostate regime. Implementing a brutal form of governance while undermining tribal structures will likely to continue to create a backlash against AQAP that will cause AQAP to lose what little popular support it may have. Highlighting the suffering of those

²⁰¹ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 42; Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 37.

²⁰² Qassem al-Raymi quoted in Philips, “What Comes Next” 77.

²⁰³ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 42; Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 37.

²⁰⁴ Page, Challita and Harris, “AQAP: Framing Narratives,” 163, 169.

²⁰⁵ Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, “Muslim Publics Share Concerns about Extremist Groups,” Pew Research Center, September 10, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/10/muslim-publics-share-concerns-about-extremist-groups/>; Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, “Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East: Negative Opinions of al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah Widespread,” Pew Research Center, July 1, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/>; Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, “Opinion of the United States,” Pew Research Center, July 1, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/1/group/6/>.

under AQAP dominance and AQC's anti-trial propaganda may be successful counter frames against the group. The fusion of global and local frames can also lead to incoherent messaging. AQAP will probably find it difficult to find mass support due to the plethora of competing opposition groups, including the Islamist Islah political party.

D. CONCLUSION /ANALYSIS

The Houthi social movement has been more successful at recruiting and mobilizing supporters than AQAP. A comparison of the two movements reveals several key differences which may explain why the Huthis have achieved mass support in parts of northern Yemen and AQAP struggles in its area of operations. First, the Huthis created a large base of support before engaging in what can be labeled as self-defense. The BY graduated students for a decade prior to the War in Iraq protests launched a government crackdown. AQAP and the Jihadi-Salafism with its roots in Afghanistan tried to win support through violence. IJY recruited many fighters in the civil war but most quit after the war was over. AQAP's southern campaign has recruited young men from across Yemen but repulsed locals with its bloodthirstiness. The greatest difference in reactions to political opportunities was during the Arab Spring. Both groups seized land, but the Huthis also worked to win over protestors and made alliances with other opposition groups. There are notable differences in framing also. The Huthis have emphasized local grievances and suggested local solutions. AQAP fuses local with pan-Islam in its frames and rely heavily on jihad as the solution. The Huthis also have the advantage of a more traditional ideology, whereas AQAP relies on a more recently created and transnational Jihadi-Salafism doctrine. Additionally, the stated Houthi demands are reactionary and anti-government, but to not advocate secession while AQAP is revolutionary, anti-government and anti-tribal.

III. COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN

“To have an impact, a strategy must be coherent, organized, and reflected in the state’s institutions... Like terrorist groups, moreover, a state’s strategy must be flexible and innovative... In addition to building institutional support, leaders must also help shape public opinion to ensure popular support for counterterrorism in general and the strategy in particular. Political leaders must also give counterterrorism appropriate priority, making concessions on other objectives as necessary.”

—Daniel Byman.²⁰⁶

A. INTRODUCTION

The chapter will examine three distinct factors affecting the Republic of Yemen’s (ROY) wars against the Huthis and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). First, the government’s strategy is analyzed using Audrey Kurth’s principles, and the legal framework used to fight terrorism will be explained. Second, the Yemeni government’s military and security organizations, resources, and measures will be considered. Finally, this chapter will outline public support for the Yemeni government. This chapter will also note any differences in strategy or prosecution of the two wars. The lack of reporting from Yemeni war zones, the lack unbiased reporting, and limited public polling makes analysis of Yemen counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies difficult.²⁰⁷

B. STRATEGY AND LEGISLATION

Yemen used a variety of strategies to combat the Huthis and al Qaeda. The strategies favor the military paradigm over the law enforcement paradigm. This is largely due the weak legal framework in Yemen for fighting an insurgency and terrorism. Yemen’s strategy uses decapitation (of leadership), negotiations, and repression.

²⁰⁶ Daniel Byman, “Measuring the War on Terrorism: A First Appraisal,” *Current History* 416 (December 2003), 413, <http://www18.georgetown.edu/data/people/dlb32/publication-32013.pdf>.

²⁰⁷ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 181–6.

1. Strategy

Cronin's *How Terrorism Ends* gauged the effectiveness of CT policies by statistical analysis of 457 terrorist organizations from 1968–2006. She finds six ways—usually in some sort of combination—which terrorism ends. According to Corin, the methods are: “decapitation, catching or killing the leader; negotiations, transition toward a legitimate political process; success, achieving the objective; failure, imploding, provoking a backlash or becoming marginalized; repression, crushing terrorism with force; and reorientation, transitioning to another modus operandi.”²⁰⁸ She finds that no group was defeated solely through repression.²⁰⁹

While *How Terrorism Ends* uses the term “terrorism and counterterrorism,” many of the groups she analyzes operate as insurgent groups. For that reason I chose to analyze Yemen's counterterrorism and counterinsurgency strategy using those six categories. While at the time of the writing the Huthis have signed a power sharing agreement with the government, the Huthis are still fighting other non-state actors which is hardly a full success.²¹⁰ Additionally, while AQAP has had setbacks, it unfortunately has not failed.

a. *Decapitation*

For this paper “decapitation” refers not to removing someone's head, but to removing the top leaders of an organization through arrest or assassination.²¹¹ This does not include air strikes against mid-to-low level members of the Huthis or AQAP. Cronin finds that decapitation operations sometimes can spell the demise of a faltering group. Other times the action has little effect or strengthens the group. The results are inconsistent.²¹² The Republic of Yemen used decapitation as a strategy based on its historic actions but the results have been mixed.

²⁰⁸ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends* vi–ix.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 141.

²¹⁰ AFP “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government.”

²¹¹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 16.

²¹² Ibid., 14.

The first incidence of the decapitation operation was in 2002 with the targeted assassination of al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) leader al-Harithi. This decapitation operation proved to be successful—in the short term. The decapitation operation hastened the collapse of AQY.²¹³ While AQY ceased to exist as an organization in Yemen, the al Qaeda ideology was not defeated and AQAP remains in Yemen today.

The second occurrence of decapitation operation was the death of Husayn al-Huthi, first leader of the Huthi movement. Originally the mission was to arrest the Believing Youth leader. A Yemeni air strike hit the cave that the Husayn al-Huthi and his family were hiding in. Husayn al-Huthi sent his wives and children out of the cave who were soon spotted by Yemeni infantrymen. After a brief period of negotiation, Husayn al-Huthi emerged from his hideout. He then allegedly reached into his jacket, possibly for a pistol he was carrying, and the soldiers opened fire and killed the Huthi leader. This decapitation operation managed to briefly pause fighting and create a Huthi martyr.²¹⁴

While the decapitation operations may have led to tactical advantages, or stopped specific terrorism operations, decapitation has done little strategically to end the conflicts in Yemen.²¹⁵ Other targeted assassinations have killed top AQAP commanders such as Said al-Shihri, Anwar al-Awlaki, and Fahd al-Quso. These deaths weakened AQAP momentarily, but have not defeated the organization.²¹⁶ This is not entirely unexpected outcome. Cronin theorizes that decapitation operation strategy stems from mirror imaging. Government officials think eliminating the head of a hierarchical organization will weaken that organization. Additionally, officials find it nearly impossible to not attack the head of the group that threatens the public safety—people demand a response to violence.²¹⁷

²¹³ Hull, *High Value Target*, 61. Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 52, 68; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 196.

²¹⁴ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 152–3, 155–7.

²¹⁵ W. Andrew Terrill, “Drones over Yemen: Weighing Military Benefits and Political Costs,” *Parameters* 42 no. 4/ 43 no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2013), 17–9, 23.

²¹⁶ IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 22–7; Terrill, “Drones over Yemen,” 17–8.

²¹⁷ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 15–6.

b. Negotiations

The government can use negotiations with insurgent groups in order to transition them into legitimate political process. Cronin finds that negotiating with mature groups²¹⁸ does not lengthen or shorten a campaign on average, but can hasten a declining group. Talks are also used to manage violence.²¹⁹ This section limits the scope to strategic negotiations, not tactical level negotiations such as a field swap of prisoners or negotiating the end of a siege. The Yemeni government has used the strategy of negotiation with the Huthis with limited results. The Yemeni government has also negotiated with al Qaeda, achieving *détente* at times.

The Huthis and the Republic of Yemen have a long and complicated negotiation history. The Huthis' stated demands are more reasonable than al Qaeda's goal of violently overthrowing the government and establishing an Islamic State.²²⁰ The Huthis demand the end of corruption and government abuses, enfranchisement, equal access to government funds, freedom of religion, equality, and rule of law.²²¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells assert that the negotiations hurt the prospects for peace during the six round Sadah War because the talks built up mutual mistrust due to frequent break downs.²²²

During the Sadah War (2004–2010) the Huthi family and the Yemeni government negotiated multiple times. Early on, between 2004 and 2006, half a dozen attempts for mediation between sides occurred. At first, the Huthis felt it had the upper hand so in June 2004, and again in July 2004, talks fell apart. Later Brig. General Ali Muhsin, acting independently, disrupted negotiations by attacking the Huthis. In 2005, Sadah saw a short ceasefire. Later in 2007, Qatar intervened and the Doha agreement was signed in 2008 (see Chapter V Section D), but fighting continued despite this international mediation. Later in the conflict, President Saleh was more confident and often did not follow through on promises such as the release of prisoners. The lack of command and control

²¹⁸ Groups over five years old.

²¹⁹ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 35–6.

²²⁰ Hafez, “Illegitimate Governance,” 94.

²²¹ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 14–5; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 17.

²²² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182.

capabilities on the Houthi side is another reason the talks failed. The Huthis could not control its allies fighting in its name who would continue to fight during mediation.²²³

In early 2010 a unilateral ceasefire was declared by the Huthis after several months of Saudi armed intervention. The Huthis accepted the Yemeni government's conditions, provided the Saudi's would stop attacking them. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the ROY soon followed the Huthis in declaring ceasefires.²²⁴ Qatar intervened again in August 2010 and negotiated an “explanatory index” to the original Doha agreement.²²⁵ This ceasefire proved more durable since confidence measures were undertaken. Yemen released a large number of Houthi prisoners.²²⁶

After the Arab Spring, the Huthis were able to consolidate power in Sadah governorate while increasing its political power in the capital.²²⁷ The government included the Huthis in the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which gave them a legitimate national and international voice.²²⁸ In September 2014, after defeating its rivals and taking control of the capital the Huthis negotiated, from a position of strength, a power sharing agreement.²²⁹ It is too early to assess the power sharing agreement. The Doha agreements were not fully implemented but in this case the Huthis are more powerful than during the Sadah Wars, so the outcome may be different.

The Yemeni government negotiated off and on with AQAP and its predecessor organizations. Novak notes that the Yemeni government and jihadists have enjoyed *détente* since the 1990s.²³⁰ Negotiation with al Qaeda directly began in 2002 with the so-called “Dialog Program.” Jihadists that promised not to attack Yemeni targets would be

²²³ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 181–6.

²²⁴ Ibid., 187.

²²⁵ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 20–1.

²²⁶ Winter, *Conflict in Yemen*, 113.

²²⁷ International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” i–ii.

²²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²²⁹ Ghobari, “Houthi Tighten Grip”; International Crisis Group, “Yemen, October 1, 2014”; AFP “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government”; “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” Jazeera (In English).

²³⁰ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 12.

left alone by the government. The program let some al Qaeda members out of jail early so they could go and fight in Iraq or elsewhere.²³¹ In 2005 and 2006, the head of the Political Security Organization (PSO) and former bin Laden associate Rashad Mohammed Saeed openly negotiated with al Qaeda promising money and cars for compliance with the “do not attack” agreement. Later Brig. General Ali Muhsin recruited jihadists to fight as mercenaries in the Sadah War.²³² The *détente* broke down in 2007 when seven elderly Spanish tourists were massacred at the Queen of Sheba’s temple.²³³

c. Success or Failure

Sometimes terrorist or insurgency campaigns end when groups achieve their objectives. Success is difficult to define since it is defined by the group itself.²³⁴ There are limited examples of this happening in Yemen; the closest example is the Islamic Jihad in Yemen (IJY). After the Yemeni government recruited IJY in the 1994 Civil War, the group dissolved and former members returned home or were rewarded with jobs in the military, security forces, or civil service.²³⁵ Success in this case assumes that its goal was jobs. The Huthis may be another example, if the power sharing agreement is implemented and the group lays down its arms.

Failure is when a terrorist group disintegrates due to its own tactics. This can be observed as a backlash, implosion, or marginalization.²³⁶ Unfortunately neither AQAP nor the Huthis are close to failure. The Aden Abyan Islamic Army in Yemen is a good example of failure. The backlash against group for murdering tourists combined with repression lead to its demise.²³⁷

²³¹ Jane Novak, “Yemen Strikes Multifaceted Deals with al-Qaeda,” *Long War Journal*, February 11, 2009, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/02/yemens_multifaceted.php; Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 135–44.

²³² Novak, “Deals with al-Qaeda.”

²³³ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 36; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 206

²³⁴ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 73–5.

²³⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 23; Koehler-Derrick, *A False Foundation*, 23.

²³⁶ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 94–95.

²³⁷ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 166–9; Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 26–7, 30; Carapico, “Aden Abyan Islamic Army.”

d. Repression

This section will give a general overview of strategy and tactics used by the government to repress the Huthis and AQAP and their followers (and often others in the vicinity). Repression is the most instinctive reaction to violence from non-state organizations. Cronin defines repression as “the state’s use of overwhelming, indiscriminate, or disproportionate force...”²³⁸ The Yemeni government used repression against both the Huthi and AQAP. The organization, resources, and implementation of the military will be covered in later in this chapter in Section C.

An ideal counterinsurgency strategy is clear-and-hold. Clear-and-hold requires foot-mobile “soft entry” into villages followed by intelligence driven police-like operations. The Yemeni military lacks the equipment and training for such operations. The military is also constrained by the rugged geography of Yemen. During the Sadah War, based off of limited reporting, the Yemeni military generally used a strategy of blockade-and-bombard. This involves creating a cordon around a village or hide out to prevent escape then indiscriminate bombardment of the target area with artillery and air strikes.²³⁹ The Yemeni militaries poor counterinsurgency doctrine has led to high levels of civilian casualties. The Huthis claim 25,000 civilian casualties, although other organizations put the number much lower.²⁴⁰ The bombardment tactics caused many neutral or pro-government Yemenis to side with the Huthis after they were trapped in the bombardment zone or their property was damaged.²⁴¹

When fighting AQAP in the south the Yemeni military used similar blockade-and-bombard tactics. The government either learned its lesson from fighting the Huthis or employed more enlightened commanders because the military attempted to evacuate the towns prior to military action.²⁴² A key difference in the Sadah War and the AQAP insurgency is that the locals sided with the government against AQAP and Ansar al

²³⁸ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 115.

²³⁹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 164–5.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴¹ IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” 7.

²⁴² Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 62–4.

Shariah (ASY).²⁴³ Locals formed “Popular Committees” (militias) that are dedicated to protecting their property and have extensive knowledge of the local terrain.²⁴⁴

The government engaged in other forms of repression. The government used mass arrests and detention of suspected Huthis or former Believing Youth members. The military have historically arrested AQAP and Huthi member’s non-combatant relatives, including the elderly and young, and seized their family’s property as a punishment.²⁴⁵ The ROY also briefly outlawed most aspects of the Zaydi sect. Between 2005 and 2008 the government replaced Zaydi preachers with Salafi preachers in mosques across the country, prohibited celebrating the main Zaydi holiday al-Ghadir, and confiscated all Zaydi related texts.²⁴⁶ In addition to restricting the freedom of religion, the government restricts NGO and press access to the war zone. The Yemen government reported in 2008 that it jailed 1200 political prisoners while the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated 3000 political prisoners.²⁴⁷

The government named the operation during the sixth round of the Sadah War “Operation Scorched Earth.”²⁴⁸ While it is not clear that the government actually engaged in actual scorched earth tactics, reports indicate that the government blockaded fuel and food shipments and cut communication lines into Sadah.²⁴⁹ Without fuel,

²⁴³ Dimitris Soudias and Mareike Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions: Local Security, Insecurity and Police Work in Yemen,” Yemen Polling Center, July 2014, 18–19 <http://yemenpolling.org/advocacy/publications>

²⁴⁴ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–7; Combs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias,” 5.

²⁴⁵ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 150.

²⁴⁶ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 249; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 66.

²⁴⁷ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 245–52.

²⁴⁸ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 106; scorched earth—defined (and prohibited) by Article 54 of Protocol I of the 1977 Geneva Conventions.” It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.” Geneva Conventions, *Protocol I of the 1977 Geneva Conventions*, 267 <http://www.redcross.org/rulesofwar/additional-protocol-i-to-the-geneva-conventions-1977>.

²⁴⁹ Christopher Boucek, “War in Saada: From Local Insurrection to National Challenge,” in *Yemen on the Brink*, ed. Christopher Boucek and Marina Ottaway (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010), 47.

farmers cannot run generators that power water pumps. Crops normally sold in the rest of Yemen or Saudi Arabia were reportedly left to rot waiting for delivery. At the end of the sixth round of conflict in Sadah 300,000 residents were displaced, 9,000 structures destroyed, and 25,000 dead.²⁵⁰ According to Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells official government figures (after the fifth round) add “900 farms, 90 mosques, 80 schools, five health care facilities” destroyed or damaged in Sadah governorate.²⁵¹ As of September 2014 287,809 internally displaced persons (IDP) remained.²⁵²

e. Reorientation

Reorientation is simply defined by Cronin as “transitioning to another modus operandi.” Cronin explains this as turning to criminal behavior, such as organized crime, or to insurgency or civil war.²⁵³ I believe reorientation to a political party should be included here. That is often done through negotiations. The Huthi started out as a resistance movement²⁵⁴ and reoriented to insurgency,²⁵⁵ and AQAP started out as a terrorist group²⁵⁶ and reoriented towards insurgency. With the power sharing agreement signed between the Huthis and the government it is possible the Huthis will reorient to a political party.

²⁵⁰ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 16; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 2.

²⁵¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 243–49.

²⁵² United Nations, *YEMEN: Humanitarian Snapshot—Conflict & Population Movements (October 2014)* (New York: OCHA, November 2014), <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/snapshot%20-%209%20Nov.pdf>.

²⁵³ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends*, 146.

²⁵⁴ resistance movement—an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power and to disrupt civil order and stability. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms*, s.v. “resistance movement.”

²⁵⁵ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xvi; insurgency—the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms*, s.v. “Insurgency.”

²⁵⁶ terrorism—the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms*, s.v. “Terrorism.”

2. Legislation

Yemen has a weak legal framework for fighting terrorism. Currently the legal system is a mix of shariah law, the Napoleonic code, English common law, and Yemeni customary law.²⁵⁷ As of 2014, the Republic of Yemen has no laws on the books to directly fight terrorism. An anti-terrorism law drafted in 2008 has not passed the Yemeni Parliament. In 2013, revisions were made to the 2008 draft law but the newer version has yet to be signed into law. If passed the law would help law enforcement detain suspects accused of terrorism and set a minimum mandatory sentencing for numerous terrorism related crimes.²⁵⁸ Currently, much to the expressed frustration of the Yemeni Ministry of Legal Affairs, terrorism suspects are charged with “membership in an armed gang.”²⁵⁹ Suspects found guilty of the gang membership charge receive relatively light sentences.²⁶⁰ Suspects arrested for murder, destruction of property, or other crimes can be charged with those crimes.²⁶¹

Yemen participates in international anti-terrorism legal programs. ROY has the capability to screen people using biographic and biometric data through its participation in the U.S. State Department sponsored Terrorist Interdiction Program’s (TIP) Personal Identification Secure Comparison Evolution System (PISCES) at 26 points of entry. Widespread corruption undermines the efforts to stop terrorists from entering Yemen with TIP-PISCES. Yemen is also a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force regional body. The task force noted as of 2013 Yemen had “strategic deficiencies” and had yet to fully criminalize money laundering or financing terrorism.²⁶²

²⁵⁷ “Yemen,” The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, last modified April 29, 2014 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>.

²⁵⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013, Chapter 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2014), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/>.

²⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012, Chapter 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/>.

²⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Reports on Terrorism 2013*.

²⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010, Chapter 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2011), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2010/>.

²⁶² U.S. Department of State, *Reports on Terrorism 2013*.

The overall assessment of the law enforcement and judicial system in Yemen is that it is of limited use against terrorists. The U.S. State Department assesses that the Yemeni “law enforcement units demonstrated limited capacity to detect, deter, or respond to terrorist incidents.” There is little interagency coordination or information sharing and the lack of the terrorism laws discourage law enforcement officials.²⁶³ The Yemeni military has the primary counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capability.²⁶⁴

C. COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM ORGANIZATION, RESOURCES AND MEASURES IN YEMEN

Three aspects are examined in this section. The organizational framework of the Yemeni military and security services, focusing on units engaged in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. Next, the resources of those units will be examined. Finally, the implication of the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategy will be analyzed.

1. Organizational Framework

There are two phases to the organization framework of the military and security structure. The first phase dates to the start of the conflict, and can be described as a “coup-proof” military organization. The second phase started post-Arab Spring. The military and security services are currently being reorganized. President Hadi’s main goal of the reorganization is to consolidate power over the military and weaken former President Saleh loyalists—in other words he is creating a different “coup-proof” military structure.²⁶⁵ Neither structure is designed with Yemeni external security as the number one goal. The main purpose of the military is to defend the regime against internal threats.²⁶⁶

The first phase of the military organizational framework was designed in what James T. Quinlivan calls “coup-proofing” which is characterized by “parallel military

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Reports on Terrorism 2012*.

²⁶⁵ IHS Jane’s, “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 2.

²⁶⁶Ibid., 4.

organizations and multiple internal security agencies” (see Figure 1). The “parallel” units (Republican Guard and later the Strategic Reserve Forces) receive the best training and equipment. However, the practice is known to undermine overall effectiveness to the state’s military because of the multiple chains of command.²⁶⁷ In this section, I will highlight the units that have COIN/CT duties.

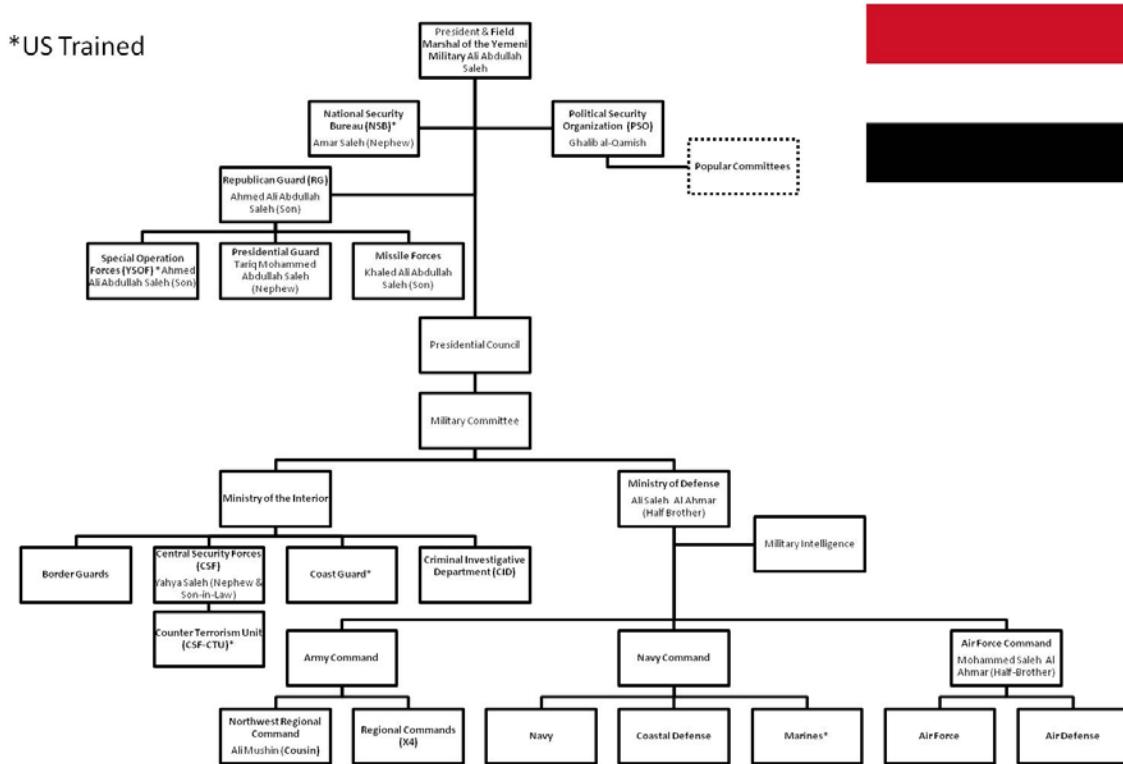


Figure 1. First Military Operational Framework²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ James T. Quinlivan, “Coup-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East,” *International Security*, 24, no. 2 (Autumn 1999), 131–4, 165.

²⁶⁸ IHS Jane’s, “World Armies: Yemen,” *Jane’s World Armies*, last modified, December 8, 2009. <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=++1319331&Pubabbrev=JWAR>; Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 4–6; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 22–3; Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions,” 18–9; Sarah Phillips, “Yemen: Developmental Dysfunction and Division in a Crisis State,” Developmental Leadership Program, February 14, 2011, 33–6, <http://www.dlprog.org/news-events/new-paper-yemen-developmental-dysfunction-and-division-in-a-crisis-state.php>; Hull, *High Value Target*, 8–9, 35–6, 80.; and work of author.

Yemen has three intelligence agencies. The first intelligence agency is the Political Security Organization (PSO), which reports directly to the president and is tasked with counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and general intelligence gathering. The PSO has the authority to make arrests and runs its own prison system. The PSO reportedly worked with the CIA to combat al Qaeda.²⁶⁹ The organization is said to employ former jihadists, likely from the Islamic Jihad of Yemen (IYJ).²⁷⁰ The PSO also worked with the FBI on the *USS Cole* bombing. The organization was led by Ghalib al-Qamish, one of the few top commanders not related to President Saleh.²⁷¹ In order to replace the jihadi staffed and corrupt PSO, President Saleh created the independent National Security Bureau (NSB) in 2002. The NSB's role is to coordinate intelligence across the government and security forces and liaison with foreign intelligence services. The NSB was run by Ali al-Ansi and Colonel Ammar Saleh, the president's nephew.²⁷² The final intelligence agency is the Ministry of Defense's Military Intelligence (MI). MI is responsible for internal security and has the power to arrest and detain suspects.²⁷³

The Republic of Yemen maintains two Special Forces units tasked with combating terrorists. First, in the Republican Guard was the Yemeni Special Operation Forces (YSOF) which reported directly to President Saleh. Previously lead by the president's son Ahmad Saleh, the unit is tasked counterterrorism, hostage rescue, and anti-riot duties. The YSOF received training from U.S. Special Forces.²⁷⁴ Subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior was the Central Security Forces-Counter Terrorism Unit (CSF-CTU). Part of the larger gendarmerie Central Security Forces, the CSF-CTU, also

²⁶⁹ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* last modified, February 12, 2014. <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303619&Pubabbrev=GULF>

²⁷⁰ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 182.

²⁷¹Ibid., 75–80.

²⁷² IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces."

²⁷³ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Special Forces (Government)," *Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces*, last modified, April 22, 2014.

<https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1308898&Pubabbrev=JASF>.

²⁷⁴ IHS Jane's, "World Armies: Yemen."

received U.S. CT training. Formally lead by the president's nephew Yahya Saleh, the CTU-CSF is tasked according to IHS Jane's with "hostage rescue, close-quarters combat, forced entry and operations against high-value targets."²⁷⁵ The Ministry of Defense did not have any specific counterterrorism units.

The military and security forces of the Ministry of the Defense and to a lesser extent the CSF and Republican Guard (RG) provided a majority of the forces for the counterinsurgency operations. The Ministry of Defense controlled "regular army" is charged with defending the country from outside invasion (although this is not likely with the improved relations with its neighbors) and counterinsurgency. The regular army has waged numerous campaigns against insurgents, jihadists, and tribal militias.²⁷⁶ The regular army was divided into five regional commands.²⁷⁷ The RG acted mainly as a praetorian guard with its members drawn from the president's tribal confederation. The RG was commanded by the president's son Ahmad Saleh.²⁷⁸ The final security force is the Ministry of the Interior's Central Security Force (CSF). The CSF's role is in internal order and security including running internal checkpoints and securing government buildings and essential infrastructure.²⁷⁹

The second phase of the organizational framework started with the accession of President Hadi to the Presidency in February 2012. President Hadi worked to unify the divided command structure of the military while weakening military commanders viewed as not loyal (see Figure 2). This period is also known for a marked increased ability of the armed forces to confront AQAP. President Hadi removed former President Saleh's son Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh as head of the Republican Guard and Yemeni Special Operations forces, removed former President Saleh's nephew Yahya Saleh as head of the

²⁷⁵ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces."

²⁷⁶ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, last modified May 15, 2009. <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303617&Pubabbrev=GULF>.

²⁷⁷ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, last modified July 25, 2014 <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1303617&Pubabbrev=GULF>.

²⁷⁸ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Army," (2009).

²⁷⁹ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces."

Central Security Forces and Brig. General Ali Muhsin as head of the First Armored Division. In December 2012, he issued a decree restructuring the armed forces into five branches and abolishing the Republican Guard and First Armor Division.²⁸⁰

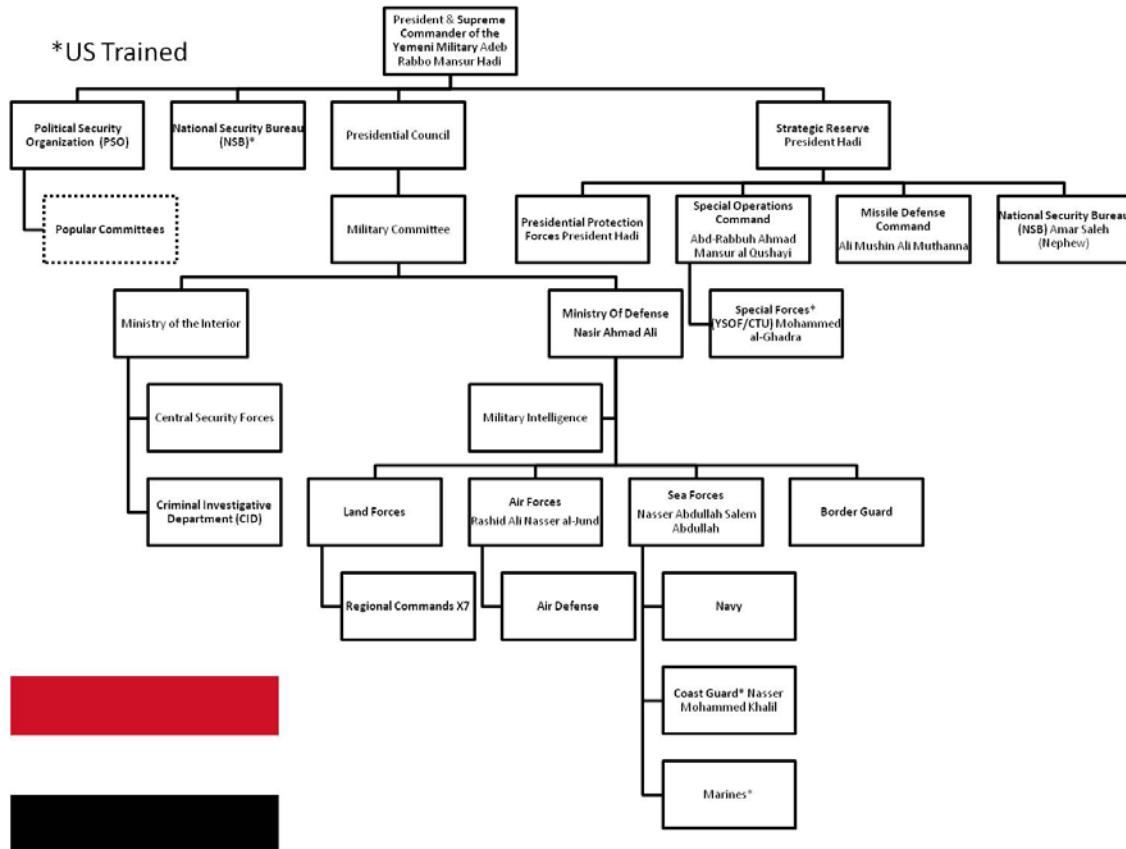


Figure 2. Second Military Organizational Framework²⁸¹

While the organizational framework changed, and most of Saleh's relatives were removed, the roles of the individual organizations did not change. The intelligence

²⁸⁰ IHS Jane's "Executive Summary: Yemen," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, last modified June 25, 2009, 2009.

²⁸¹ IHS Jane's, "Yemen's president restructures military," December 21, 2012, <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=++1535110&Pubabbrev=JDW>; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2012), 4–6; Soudias and Transfeld, "Mapping Popular Perceptions," 18–9; Hull, *High Value Target*, 8–9, 35–6, 80; IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Armed Forces," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, last modified September, 17 2014 ; and work of author.

agencies did not change in the organizational framework.²⁸² The Special Forces changed significantly, with the CSF-CTU and the YSOF moved into the new Special Forces Command in the Strategic Reserve Forces. The army increased the number of regional commands from five to seven. Other significant changes include dissolving the Republican Guard and folding its units into the Ministry of Defense or the new Strategic Reserve Forces.²⁸³ The Strategic Reserve Forces appears to continue the “coup-proofing” military tradition.

2. COIN/CT Resources

Yemen must deal with limited resources when conducting its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. The army has a large number of personnel, but soldiers are often poorly trained and equipped. The army had to shift focus from conventional warfare to counterinsurgency warfare in the past decade but the military commanders continue to focus on heavy weapons better suited for conventional warfare.

The Republic of Yemen has a relatively large standing military to deal with numerous internal threats. The army employs 60,000 active duty personal and 40,000 reservists. An additional 200,000 “inactive” troops (also called “ghost soldiers”) exist. The “inactive troops” collect a salary but do not perform any duties. Ghost troops are a clear waste of money and resources. The Yemeni military also has 5000 airmen, 1700 sailors, and 500 marines.²⁸⁴ The Yemeni military relies on conscription—but mainly as a way to counteract unemployment.²⁸⁵ The government, ranked eleven in the world in military spending of GDP, spends approximately 4 percent GDP on its military.²⁸⁶

²⁸² IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Security and Foreign Forces,” (2014).

²⁸³ IHS Jane’s, “Yemen’s president restructures military.”

²⁸⁴ IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Armed Forces,” (2014); IHS Jane’s, “Yemen: Army,” (2014).

²⁸⁵ IHS Jane’s.”World Armies: Yemen,” *Jane’s World Armies*. Last modified, July 16, 2014.

<https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=++1319331&Pubabbrev=JWAR>.

²⁸⁶ “Yemen,” *The World Factbook*.

The training and equipping of units is inconsistent. Front-line troops in the regular army are poorly trained and equipped.²⁸⁷ The elite units of the former RG, YSOF, and CSF-CTU received American training and equipment but are mainly used as a praetorian guard and are rarely used against the Huthis or Ansar al Shariah.²⁸⁸ The Americans have provided transport aircraft, four *Huey* and 10 *Hip* helicopters, 50 HMMWVs, radios, and night vision goggles. The equipment is designed to be used for counterterrorism raids by Special Forces.²⁸⁹ While there is known to be a ground forces training center, little information is available on military training outside the Special Forces.²⁹⁰

Except for small numbers of advanced equipment reserved for counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda, the Yemeni military is equipped with a mix of aging Soviet, American, and French military equipment. The equipment is designed for conventional warfare. There are reportedly no plans to modernize current equipment, but the government is said to be interested procuring additional T-72 main battle tanks.²⁹¹

3. COIN/CT Implementation

The implementation of successful counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategy has been hindered by several factors. First, poor counterinsurgency doctrine causes destruction while doing little to win control over territory contested by the Huthis or AQAP. Second, the government can only achieve low levels of joint service interoperability. Finally, elite power struggles hampers the military's full capabilities.

As noted earlier, the Yemeni military uses a poorly developed counterinsurgency doctrine. The strategy of blockade-and-bombard, which involves creating a cordon around a village to prevent escape then indiscriminate bombarding of the target, leads to high levels of civilian casualties.²⁹² An outer cordon often included much of Sadah

²⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*

²⁸⁸ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Army," (2009).

²⁸⁹ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 70–1.

²⁹⁰ IHS Jane's."World Armies: Yemen," (2014).

²⁹¹ IHS Jane's."World Armies: Yemen," (2014).

²⁹² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 164–5.

Governorate, with food and fuel shipments stopped from reaching the greater population.²⁹³ The strategy dates back to at least the 1994 civil war when it was used by the northern forces²⁹⁴ suggesting little has evolved in military thought and shows how the military is neither flexible nor innovative. The battles won against the Huthis and AQAP were due to the militants withdrawing rather than through infantry operations.²⁹⁵ The military during the Sadah Wars reportedly also used small unit engagements.²⁹⁶

The Yemeni military has achieved low levels of joint interoperability. During the Sadah Wars the Yemeni Air Force conducted limited offensive air operations against Huthi positions, although strikes were not coordinated with the army. During the Abyan battle, the air force conducted similar air strikes and the navy reportedly conducted limited naval artillery operations on AQAP positions.²⁹⁷

During the Huthi conflict, the Yemeni military deployed its conventional forces including infantry, armor, artillery, and support engineer units. The elite Republican Guard and Yemeni YSOF were reported engage in missions to capture or kill high value targets but were normally retained for purposes of regime security in Sanaa. The army was led by Brig. General Ali Muhsin and Yemeni's often call the Sadah War "Ali Muhsin's War." The regular army was made up of mostly Sunni conscripts from the south and anti-Huthi officers from Sadah governorate.²⁹⁸ Ali Muhsin often relied on slow moving tanks and armored personnel carriers in the Sadah War which were vulnerable to RPGs and IEDs. Despite the use of heavy weapons and air power, the Yemen military were unable to defeat the lightly armed Huthis.²⁹⁹

The government's efforts to secure Sadah governorate were undermined by elite struggles within the regime. The dispute was between Brig. General Ali Muhsin, the main

²⁹³ Boucek, "War in Saada," 47.

²⁹⁴ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Armed Forces." (2014).

²⁹⁵ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 164–5; IHS Jane's."World Armies: Yemen," (2014).

²⁹⁶ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Armed Forces." (2014).

²⁹⁷ IHS Jane's, "Yemen: Armed Forces." (2014).

²⁹⁸Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 159–60, 167.

²⁹⁹ IHS Jane's."World Armies: Yemen,"(2014).

Yemeni commander during the Sadah wars, and Ahmed Ali Saleh, the commander of the Republican Guard and YSOF.³⁰⁰ The cause of the dispute was over the possible succession of Ahmed Ali to the office of President. During the Sadah War, Ali Muhsin requested the full backing of the RG and CSF but President Saleh reportedly refused.³⁰¹ The dispute reached new heights when military planners in Sanaa working with the Saudi Air Force in 2009 gave a list of proposed air strike targets that included Ali Muhsin's headquarters.³⁰² President Saleh also reportedly withheld new equipment from the troops fighting in the Sadah, instead procuring new Russian equipment for the Republican Guard.³⁰³

In the war against AQAP/ASY in Abyan, which occurred during the backdrop of the Arab Spring, the effort was stalled due to the political situation. After seizing the town of Jaar, hundreds al Qaeda militants attacked the Abyan governorate capital of Zinjibar. After over running the CSF garrison, AQAP tried to take the 25 Mechanized Brigade but were held off by the regular army troops and the CSF policemen that managed to regroup at the base. The base commander General Sumali called for backup. At this point in time, Ali Muhsin had defected and the military was split between pro-Saleh and pro-Muhsin factions. General Sumali took a neutral or "pro-Yemen" stance neither the Republican Guard nor the Muhsin-loyal 119 Brigade would assist him.³⁰⁴ It was only after the President Hadi took over that a coordinated counter-offense was able to drive AQAP from the battlefield.³⁰⁵

The Yemeni government has also employed tribal militiamen in both conflicts. During the Huthi Wars the government employed thousands of Sunni tribesmen from outside Sadah to fight the Huthis. Brig. General Ali Muhsin is reported to have recruited Islah (Muslim Brotherhood) fighters and Salafi extremists from the south to battle the

³⁰⁰ Ginny Hill, "Yemen Unrest: Saleh's Rivals Enter Elite Power Struggle," *BBC*, May 26, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13560514>

³⁰¹ Phillips, "Developmental Dysfunction and Division," 35–6.

³⁰² Hill, "Yemen Unrest."

³⁰³ Phillips, "Developmental Dysfunction and Division," 35–6.

³⁰⁴ Johnsen, *The Last Refuge*, 276–8.

³⁰⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 37–52.

Huthis.³⁰⁶ In the fight in the Abyan against AQAP, the government equipped and funded local “Popular Committees.” Unlike in the Sadah War most of these militias are defending their home towns from AQAP.³⁰⁷ The use of tribes has precedent with tribal militias fighting in the 1962 and 1994 civil wars. Working with tribal militias has the added benefit for the government of dividing and weakening the tribes.³⁰⁸ A drawback to outsourcing the state security is that these Popular Committees could turn on the government or side with another militant group.

D. PUBLIC SUPPORT IN YEMEN

Analysis of public support for the Yemeni government reveals low levels of support. This was fairly evident by the Arab Spring. The political situation is chaotic with multiple factions fighting for control, which can undermine the public’s faith in the government. The economy and social situation is equally as bad with the middle class shrinking and poverty rising and rising levels of corruption. Limited public polling reveals significant levels of perceived insecurity across Yemen.

1. Political Situation in Yemen

The Political situation in Yemen is best described as unstable and chaotic. The central government has to compete with the tribes, political parties, independently minded regional military leaders, Islamists, the Huthis, and Hirak for the Weberian monopoly of violence.³⁰⁹ IHS Jane’s asserts that Yemen relies heavily on “patronage, coercion, and propaganda” to rule.³¹⁰ In addition to the Huthi and AQAP insurgencies, the Arab Spring also changed the political situation in Yemen. The Arab Spring in Yemen started in early 2011 and ended with President Saleh resigning in return for immunity from prosecution. Saleh signed a CCG brokered deal on November 23rd. Soon thereafter, Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour al-Hadi was then “elected” in a one

³⁰⁶ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 162.

³⁰⁷ Coombs, “Yemen’s Use of Militias.”

³⁰⁸ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 111.

³⁰⁹ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 1–2.

³¹⁰ IHS Jane’s, “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 2.

candidate election. President Hadi purged the government of Saleh's family after taking office.³¹¹

Following President Hadi's election, the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was held to form a new government. The NDC brought together representatives from various political parties and groups, but is moving much slower than planned with only an agreement on federation signed. The NDC still needs to write a new constitution, hold a referendum on the constitution, and hold presidential and parliamentary elections—all of which should have happened by February 2014.³¹²

The Huthis complicated matters when its forces and allies seized control of the capital and forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement in late 2014.³¹³ It is too early to assess the results of the Huthi "victory" and power sharing. Emerging reports are linking the sudden victory to a secret alliance with former President Saleh. The Huthi ranks were reportedly swelled with laid off former Republican Guards.³¹⁴

The constant political upheaval caused by the Sadah wars, the AQAP-led insurgencies, the Arab Spring, internal political power plays, the slowness of the NDC process and finally the Huthi takeover undoubtedly undermine public confidence in the government. While it appears the wars with the Huthis are over for now, fighting AQAP and Ansar al Shariah will probably have some support since these groups are viewed as less legitimate than the government.

2. Economic and Social Situation

The economic and social situation of a country contributes to the general satisfaction of the people and affects their support for the government and its policies.

³¹¹ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2012), 4–5.

³¹² Jeremy M. Sharp, *Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 1–3.

³¹³ Ghobari, "Houthi Tighten Grip"; International Crisis Group, "Yemen, October 1, 2014"; "Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government," *AFP*; "Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis," *al Jazeera* (In English).

³¹⁴ IHS Jane's, "Meteoric rise — Yemeni Houthi's emergence as a national powerbroker," <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=++1728057&Pubabbrev=JIAA#Saleh support>.

The economic and social situation in Yemen is poor. IHS Jane's assesses that the “combination of economic and social factors exacerbated by perceptions of corruption” is the main cause of Yemen's problems.³¹⁵ This was evident during the Arab Spring protests. This section will provide a concise overview of economic and social situation in Yemen.

Yemen has two major industries, oil and qat—both are part of the same negative feedback loop. Oil makes up 60 percent of the state's revenue but at the current level of production oil reserves will be exhausted in 10 to 15 years. Oil accounts for 87 percent of exports making it the main source of foreign currency.³¹⁶ In 2006, the ROY started an economic program to diversify the economy.³¹⁷ The revenue generated by oil pays for fuel subsidies which accounts for around 11 percent of GDP. The low fuel prices in turn make the cost of pumping water artificially low and the cheap water is then used to grow qat. The mild narcotic qat is Yemen's main cash crop. Cultivation of qat employs 12 percent of the Yemeni population and uses 40 percent of the countries water supply. Qat hurts productivity with workers spending upwards of one quarter of the work day on qat breaks. The average Yemeni spends between 10 percent and 30 percent of their annual income on the drug.³¹⁸

Yemen's economic and resource long-term structural economic problems might eclipse its current problems with the Huthis and AQAP.³¹⁹ First, attacks on the oil infrastructure could lead to sudden drops in government revenue, a possible a balance-of-payment crisis and difficulties in paying government salaries on time. Second, long term declines on oil revenue would result in the same problems—and fixing a pipeline will not

³¹⁵ IHS Jane's “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 2.

³¹⁶ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 21–2; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 6–7.

³¹⁷ “Yemen,” *The World Factbook*.

³¹⁸ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 21–2; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 6–7.

³¹⁹ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 21.

be the quick fix.³²⁰ Without oil the already high unemployment will rise due to the layoffs from the large public sector.³²¹

The overall economic situation for the average Yemeni is also poor. The official unemployment rate is 33.7 percent and the GDP per capita (PPP) is estimated at \$2,500. Over 45 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Inflation was close to 12 percent in 2013.³²² The Yemeni middle class has shrunk since the early 2000s and hunger and malnutrition are on the rise.³²³ The population growth rate is very high at 2.72 percent (world rank 20th).³²⁴ The worsening economic situation undermines people confidence in the government.

Corruption is also a major problem in Yemen, with Terrill describing the system as a “kleptocracy.” The low pay of the large government and military workforce leads to civil servants, police, and soldiers to take small bribes from the populace to do their job. The system extends up the chain of command.³²⁵ In 2013, Yemen came in 167 out of 175 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index suggesting the population perceives widespread corruption across the government.³²⁶

With the loss of oil revenue, shrinking middle class, and increasing unemployment and poverty it will be difficult for the Yemeni government to rally public support for (or even pay for) its COIN/CT policies. This is compounded with the perception of widespread corruption. Some of these issues were manifested in the Arab Spring and the Sadah War.

³²⁰ IHS Jane's, “Executive Summary: Yemen,” (2014), 3.

³²¹ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 11–2.

³²² “Yemen,” *The World Factbook*.

³²³ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 11–2.

³²⁴ “Yemen,” *The World Factbook*.

³²⁵ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 13–4.

³²⁶ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2013*, <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results>.

3. Analysis of Public Opinion

Public Opinion data in Yemen is scarce. The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), a local institute that has partnered with Gallop, the United Nations, and the World Bank, released data in July 2014 detailing the popular perceptions of security and insecurity in Yemen.³²⁷ A significantly less detailed report was published in 2012 and 2013, making a trend analysis of the conflict time frame (2004–2014) impossible.³²⁸ Yet the 2013 and 2014 poll still provides insight in security and insecurity in Yemen. While not a measure of public support for COIN/CT policies per se, no governorate views the Yemeni government as the number one source of insecurity. The highest percentages of citizens viewing the government as the number one source of insecurity are in Sadah (20 percent), Hadramawt (15 percent) and Marib (11 percent). It is not clear whether the citizens are citing the government based on the government's actions or inactions. Yemenis view other groups as more serious problems. AQAP/ASY and other “extremists” are viewed as the number one source of insecurity in al-Jawf (35 percent), Marib (25 percent), Shabwa (20 percent), al Baydha (25 percent), Abyan (52 percent), Lahj (33 percent), and Hadramawt (25 percent). Huthis are viewed as the main source of insecurity in Sadah (24 percent), Hajja (25 percent), and Sanaa (18 percent). Tribal conflicts are of the greatest concern in Rayma (16 percent) and Dhamar (15 percent). Finally crime is the number one source of insecurity in Amran (20 percent), Aden (34 percent), al Dhali (20 percent), Taiz (18 percent), Ibb (24 percent), and Sanaa City (36 percent). The data is not available for a conclusive assessment but logic dictates that higher levels of insecurity could translate into higher tolerance of government actions against AQAP/AY and the Huthis.³²⁹

³²⁷ Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions,” <http://yemenpolling.org/advocacy/publications>.

³²⁸ Yemen Polling Center, “The State of Security in Yemen: Great Challenges and Inherent Weaknesses,” March 2012, <http://yemenpolling.org/advocacy/publications>; Yemen Polling Center, “Public Perceptions of the Security Sector and Police Work in Yemen,” January, 2013, <http://yemenpolling.org/advocacy/publications>.

³²⁹ Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”

E. CONCLUSION/ANALYSIS

The Republic of Yemen executes its counterinsurgency and counterterrorism polities within the military paradigm. This is due to the weak legal frame work and limited policing ability. The main strategy used by the Yemeni government is repression with limited decapitation operations and negotiations. The Yemeni military is not capable on its own to use repression to end the two insurgencies. First, the military is designed in a “coup-proofing” structure, which limits the use of the best trained and best equipped units as a praetorian guard. Second, the military is still equipped to fight a conventional war and has yet to adapt to the realities of asymmetrical warfare. Third, the counterinsurgency strategy, block-and-bombard, hurts the government’s popular support. Finally, political elite infighting has undermined the military’s ability to effectively fight AQAP or the Huthis. The only bright side to the public support for counterinsurgency policies is the government’s use of Popular Committees against AQAP. This is a clear example of winning the popular support of the people against a common enemy, but at the same time it shows the weakness of the government. Unless the government makes serious changes it will still struggle to defeat the insurgencies with force.

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IV. EFFECTIVENESS OF INSURGENCIES

“The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea...It is only undisciplined troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element cannot live.”

—Mao Tse-tung³³⁰

A. INTRODUCTION

The Huthis have waged a more effective insurgency than al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al Shariah (AQAP/ASY) when measured by the standard of controlling territory. The Huthis control parts of northwest Yemen while AQAP’s control has been limited and sporadic. For the purposes for this chapter, I will limit the time frame of the study to the start of the respective insurgencies. The Huthis became an insurgent group in 2004 and AQAP/ASY became an insurgent group in 2010.³³¹ In this chapter, I will compare five variables. First, the strategies and development of the Huthis and AQAP since the outbreak of their respected conflicts will be compared. The second variable is the organizational structure and resources of the groups. Third, the recruitment strategies and popular support of the organizations will be compared. International support for the Huthis and AQAP, an important factor in successful insurgencies, is the fourth variable.³³² Finally, a survey of territorial gains and losses over time will be compared.

B. HUTHI MOVEMENT

The Huthi movement has several factors that differentiate them from al Qaeda. First, the Huthis have developed from a peaceful social movement, to a resistance group, to an insurgency over the course of two decades. Second, the organizational structure

³³⁰ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 88; Mao Tse-tung, *Brainy Quote*, accessed on October 21, 2014, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/guerrilla.html>.

³³¹ While the Huthis seem to get a “head start” over AQAP, the origins of the Jihadist-Salafist movement date back prior to the founding of the Believing Youth movement. The previous Jihadist-Salafist groups collapsed for a variety of reasons where as the Huthi movement has been a continuous movement for over twenty years.

³³² Daniel Bymen et al., Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements (Santa Monica, CA: RAND corp., 2001), xvii–xix, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2007/MR1405.pdf.

more closely resembles a Yemeni tribal confederation than an insurgent group. Third, the base of the Huthis is much larger and more diverse. Finally, the Huthis are more successful at capturing and administrating territory.

1. Strategies and Developments

The strategies and developments of the Huthi movement can be broken into five phases. The first phase was the Believing Youth era which was a religious revivalist social movement. During the second phase the Believing Youth became a political movement that protested Yemen's participation in the GWOT. The first two phases were covered in Chapter II and will not be further covered here. The third phase saw the Huthi movement arise as militia whose professed goals were resistance against government repression and Salafist proselytizing. Phase four started during the Arab Spring. The Huthis formed a political wing and consolidated territorial gains in Sadah and its environs. The final phase, which recently began, saw the Huthis seize Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, and force President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement. This section will focus on strategies during the third and fourth phases of development. The fifth phase is ongoing and it too early to tell if these gains will last.

The third phase of development started when the first round of the Huthi war commenced. After anti-American and anti-government protests in Sanaa resulted in clashes with Yemeni security forces and the arrests of 600 members of the BY, the Huthis changed strategies and took up arms in defense. During the first round (June 2004–September 2004), the government tried to arrest the BY leader Husayn al-Huthi but he died in a gun fight. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) declared an end to the conflict that had killed 1,000 in Sadah shortly after Husayn's death.³³³ Between September 2004 and March 2005, Badr al-din al-Huthi (Husayn's father) tried to negotiate an end to the conflict but the government officials refused to meet with him.³³⁴ Fresh fighting kicked off the second round (March 2005–April 2005), which was more widespread with combat in Sadah city. The government once again declared a unilateral cease fire after it thought

³³³ Boucek, "War in Saada," 50–1; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 134.

³³⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 134.

it killed Abdullah al-Razzami, a Huthi commander.³³⁵ During the second interim, low levels of violence continued and government arrested suspected Huthi supporters. Conflicts between Huthis and non-allied tribes continued during this time.³³⁶ The third round (December 2005–February 2006), saw an increase in violence. The round started when Huthis attacked a government checkpoint after a marked increase of pro-Huthi and pro-government tribal fighting. As punishment, the government used artillery and air strikes against villages suspected of hiding Huthi fighters. The elderly Badr al-din al-Huthi died and was replaced by his son Abdul Malik al-Huthi as leader of the Huthis. Non-Huthi allied tribes started requesting government forces leave their land during this round. Fighting stopped for the 2006 presidential election.³³⁷ Negotiations between the Huthis and government started in February 2006, although low level tribal conflict continued.³³⁸

The conflict significantly increased in intensity in the final three rounds. After a year-long lull, the fourth round began in February 2007. The government and a large number of pro-government tribal militias attacked Huthi positions in an unrestrained matter. The Huthis were on the defensive for most of the round, but managed to secure a base of operations in mountains and laid siege to a military unit trapped on a mountain. The Huthis were also able to secure more tribal allies alienated by ROY's brutal COIN policies. Ultimately, the Huthis won the fourth round which ended in January 2008 with the Qatari mediated ceasefire.³³⁹ The ceasefire collapsed after a bomb detonated outside a mosque in Sadah city killed 17 and wounded 48 in May 2008. The mosque served both Zaydis and Sunnis³⁴⁰ so it is unclear who set off the bomb. During the fifth round, Huthi fighters pushed south to the outskirts of Sanaa city. The round ended in July 2008 after a

³³⁵ Boucek, "War in Saada," 51; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 134–6.

³³⁶ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 137–8.

³³⁷ Boucek, "War in Saada," 51–2; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 138–41.

³³⁸ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 141–3.

³³⁹ Boucek, "War in Saada," 52–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 143–8.

³⁴⁰ Due to the little differences between Zaydi and Shafi'i they often worship together.

unilateral ceasefire was declared by President Saleh.³⁴¹ The final round dubbed *Operation Scorched Earth* (August 2009–February 2010), was the last major round of the conflict. President Saleh blamed the Huthis for a kidnapping and the killing of Europeans in July. The Huthis blamed pro-government tribes for the killings, and staged large protests condemning the kidnapping.³⁴² This round saw the formalization of Popular Committees and vast destruction of villages across Sadah and northern Amran governorates due to government bombardment. The Huthis gained numerous new followers and allies due to indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas. The final round also drew Saudi Arabian involvement along the border after the Huthis seized and later abandoned portions of Saudi territory. Saudi artillery and airplanes struck numerous Huthi targets in Sadah. Shortly after the failed Christmas 2009 underwear bombing of an aircraft by AQAP, Adb al Malik al-Huthi announced a ceasefire, accepting the ROY's and Saudi conditions. The final round ended with vast damage across Sadah governorate and the Huthis in control of several districts.³⁴³

During the six rounds of conflict, the Huthis' strategy was mostly defensive. The only show of initiative was the push towards the capital during the fifth round and the strategically ill-advised campaign into Saudi Arabia in the sixth round. The tactics included standard guerilla operations such as: harassing fire on camps, checkpoints, and convoys; skirmishes; primitive IED attacks against convoys; assassinating top government and pro-government tribal officials; establishing checkpoints; destroying local government building; closing or destroying roads; raiding outposts and convoys for weapons.³⁴⁴

The next phase of development occurred during the Arab spring, starting in February 2012, when the Huthis implemented a dual strategy of participating in the anti-

³⁴¹ Boucek, “War in Saada,” 53; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 148–50; Sanaa Agency, “Bomb attack on Yemen mosque kills 15,” Al Arabiya News (In English), 2 May 2008, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/05/02/49258.html>.

³⁴² It is not clear who kidnapped the westerners since no one claimed responsibility, but some analysts blame Salafists trying to start around ROY-Huthi round of conflict.

³⁴³ Boucek, “War in Saada,” 54–6; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 154–7.

³⁴⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*; 206–7; IHS Jane's, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” 6.

government protests while securing control in Sadah governorate.³⁴⁵ On the military side the Huthis were able to consolidate control (with allied tribes) of most of Sadah after northwest regional commander Brig. General Ali Muhsin and 10,000 troops defected to the anti-President Saleh camp³⁴⁶ (see Figure 3). According to Terrill, the Huthis “ran checkpoints, secured roads, collected taxes oversaw local government administration and administered justice.”³⁴⁷

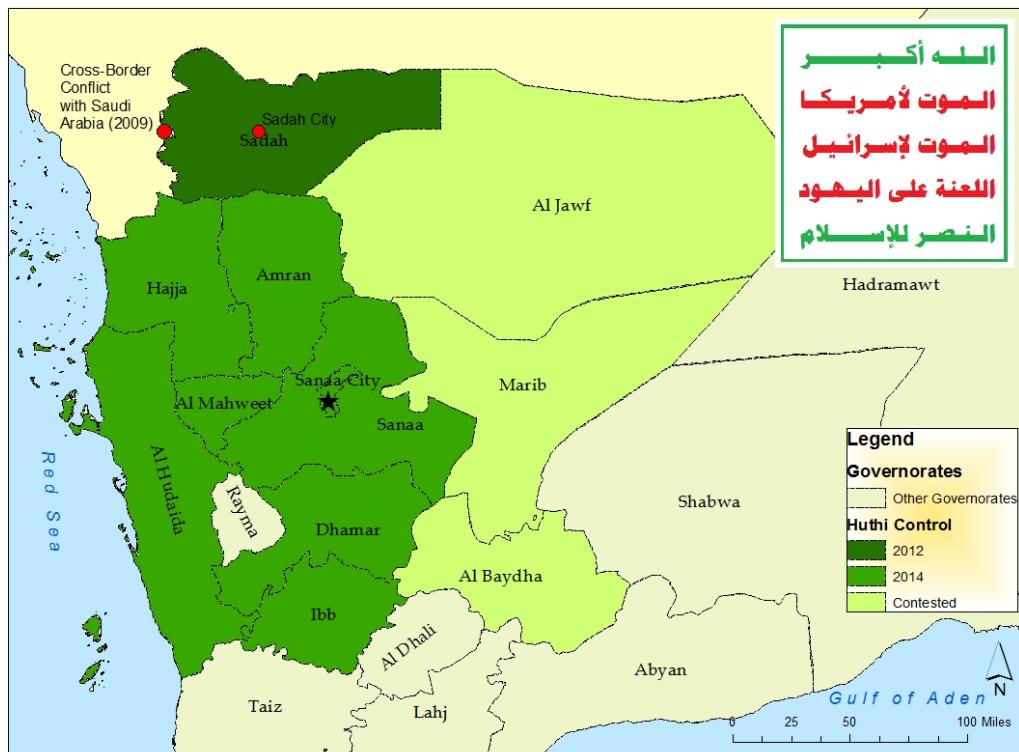


Figure 3. Map of Houthi Control as of October 2014.³⁴⁸

345 Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 14–6.

346 “10,000 Yemeni Forces Defect from Government, Join Protesters: Official,” Xinhua net (In English), April 13, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-04/13/c_13827610.htm.

347 International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” i–ii.

348 Nasser Al-Sakkaf, “Houthi Take Hodeida City and Port,” *Yemen Times*, October 16, 2014. <http://www.yementimes.com/en/1825/news/4444/Houthi-take-Hodeida-city-and-port.htm>; Oren Adaki, “AQAP, Huthis Clash In Central Yemen,” *Long War Journal*, October 16, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/10/aqap_houthis_clash_i.php; Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions,” 28–9.

At the start of the Arab Spring, the Huthis were forced to articulate a clear political platform.³⁴⁹ The Arab Spring saw the political goals of three groups overlap, the Huthis, the Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth.³⁵⁰ The Arab Spring recruits to the Huthi cause were young, urban, and educated. This urban Huthi base allied with the Hirak and Revolutionary Youth in opposition to the CCG transition plan.³⁵¹ This new liberal base advocated “Huthi positions” at the UN-backed National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which also gave them a legitimate national and international voice.³⁵² These Huthis advocated for federal democratic government with checks and balances, political pluralism, and freedom of religion. Yemeni critics charge that the Huthis are repressive in areas under its control and do not live up to its so-called ideals.³⁵³

The final phase of development started in late 2014. With government presence in the north limited, the Huthis started clashing with anti-Huthi forces. The clashes started because the Huthis alleged that the al Qaeda-linked³⁵⁴ Salafist Dammaj Institute near Sadah was training foreign fighters. This lead to a complex conflict with the Huthis and its tribal allies and newly allied members of former President Saleh’s General People’s Congress (GPC) against Salafist fighters and AQAP, and an allied bloc of Salafists, the Ahmar family, Islah, and Brig. General Ali Muhsin and his 301th Military Brigade. Fighting raged across Sadah and into Amran, Hajja and al Jawf governorates, and along the Saudi border. In July, the Yemeni Air Force started bombing Huthi positions.³⁵⁵ The Huthis and its allies won victory after victory, gaining popular support through implementing security and law and order in areas under its control. The anti-Huthi

349 Ibid., 2.

350 Winter, “Ansar of Yemen.”

351 Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.

352 International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 2.

353 Ibid., i.

354 “Gulf of Aden Security Review — December 6, 2011,” AEI: Critical Threats, December 6, 2011, http://www.criticalthreats.org/gulf-aden-security-review/gulf-aden-security-review-december-6-2011#_edn3

355 International Crisis Group, “The Huthis,” 3–4.

alliance lost the support of the Saudis due to links with the Muslim Brotherhood, which likely hastened their defeat.³⁵⁶

As of the time of the writing of this paper the Huthis appeared to have “won” (at least momentary). While fighting raged to the north of Sanaa, Huthi led protests were held in the capital to protest fuel subsidies being lifted and to call for the government to resign.³⁵⁷ Protests lasted from July until late September.³⁵⁸ Brig. General Ali Muhsin’s soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah political party eventually confronted the protestors. Huthi fighters responded to attack, defeated both groups, then captured Ali Muhsin’s 1st Armored Division headquarters and Islah leader Sheikh Abdel-Majeed al-Zindani’s³⁵⁹ al-Imam University. Large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis against the Ali Muhsin-Islah alliance. After crushing all its opponents the Huthis forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. The Huthis included the Hirak in the spoils, as it is also a signatory.³⁶⁰

2. Organization and Resources

Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells describe the Huthi organization as an “organism.”³⁶¹ The group is organized as a network with different groups with relations to the center. It should be noted that information about the structure is scarce and dated. The highest command and control of the organization falls under the control of the al Huthi family (hence the “Huthi” name). IHS Jane’s describes the command and control as run along tribal and familial lines.³⁶² The Huthi family is both a tribal and *sada* family which

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁵⁷ “Call for Houthi civil disobedience in Yemen,” al Jazeera.

³⁵⁸ “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” al Jazeera (In English).

³⁵⁹ Sheikh Abdel-Majeed al-Zindani is classified by the U.S. Treasury as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. U.S. Department of Treasury, Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN) (Washington, DC: DOT, October 2014), <http://www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/t11sdn.pdf>.

³⁶⁰ Mohammed Ghobari, “Houthi Tighten Grip”; International Crisis Group, “Yemen, October 1, 2014.”; “Yemen deal signed after Shiite rebels seize government,” AFP; “Yemen appoints new PM to end crisis,” al Jazeera (In English).

³⁶¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 189.

³⁶² IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminin,” 7–8.

increases the size of the organic network.³⁶³ In sum, the Huthis are organized into small local units across Yemen based on family, tribal, and, *sada* relationships (see Figure 4).

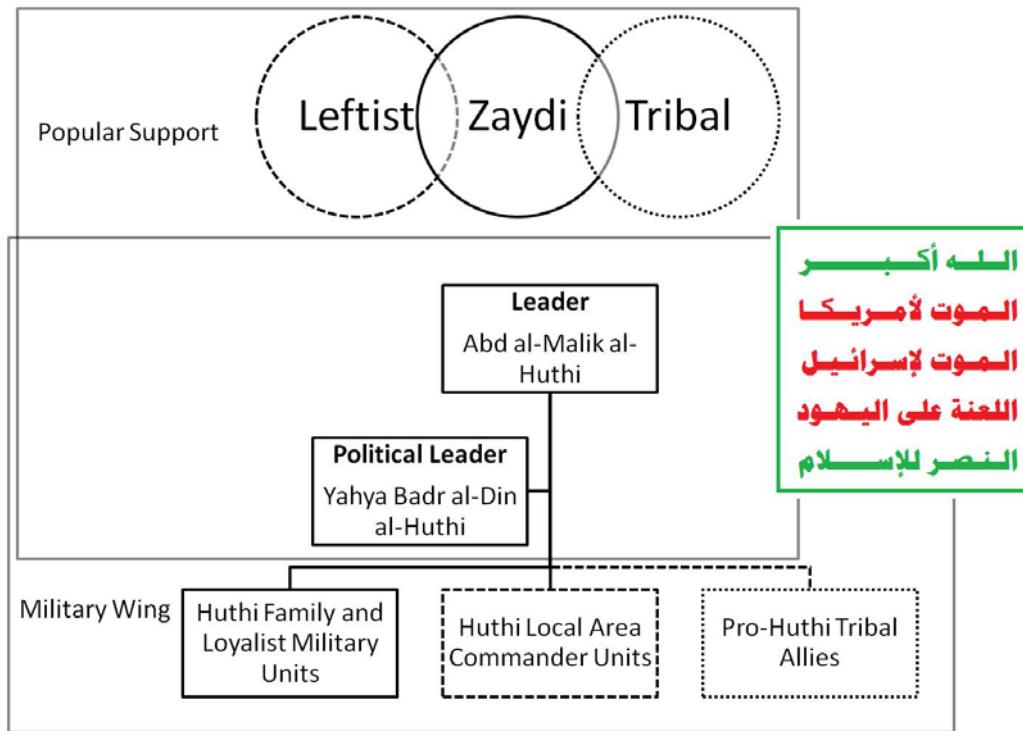


Figure 4. Theoretical Huthi Organizational Structure

The Huthis did not have a paramilitary command, control, and communications structure in place prior to the initiation of the conflict. Since the conflict started, two levels of Huthi militia have developed. At the highest level the brothers of the Huthi family share various “headquarters” duties including head commander of Huthi forces. The Huthi family commands at least three small companies. The followers in these units are loyal to the Huthis due to familial or *sada* prestige. These groups are known to move within small areas of operations.³⁶⁴ The second source of fighters operates in platoon sized groups under the command of a local field commander. These groups are tied to a

³⁶³ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 102–3.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 189–93.

local area, a town or district. Their mission is to primarily protect their homes from the military and pro-government militias. The semi-autonomous field commanders are local notables that are loyal to the Huthi family or Zaydi cause. Unlike AQAP's leaders, the field commander's authority over his followers is based on prestige rather than coercion. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells note the heterogeneous makeup of the field commanders and the Huthi organization resembles a tribal confederation network structure rather than a paramilitary structure.³⁶⁵ While the Huthi military structure violates the highly organized guerrilla army laid out by Mao,³⁶⁶ the social-based network has proven to be a successful in northern Yemen's society.

The third source of armed supporters includes tribal militias allied with the Huthis, but not under direct Huthi control. In past rounds of fighting Huthi-allied tribes tried to settle old scores with pro-government tribes.³⁶⁷ The use of tribal allies has drawbacks (for both sides) as evident when the third round the conflict between the ROY and the Huthis started when Huthi-allied tribes and pro-government tribes started clashing.³⁶⁸

In addition to the heterogeneous nature of the Huthis, the lack of effective communication or coordination also limited further centralization of the loosely formed Huthi organization. Several reports indicate the Huthi commanders and field commanders communicate via cell phones and satellite phones. Despite the communication capabilities the Huthis forces did not show the ability to coordinate attacks amongst the regional units.³⁶⁹

The Huthis raise funds through two primary channels, taxation and smuggling. There is little proof to back ROY claims of international funding (see Section B.4).

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 189–97

³⁶⁶ Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, 71–87.

³⁶⁷ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 111; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 193–4.

³⁶⁸ Boucek, “War in Saada,” 51–52.

³⁶⁹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 196–7.

According to IHS Jane's, most funds are probably raised from smuggling qat into Saudi Arabia.³⁷⁰ The Huthis also collect a *zakat* in areas it controls.³⁷¹

Weapons are plentiful in northern Yemen and are part of an overall gun culture that emphasizes personal autonomy and manliness.³⁷² The Yemeni government estimates two to three weapons per male aged 16–44. The Huthis also have access to the country's largest arms market Suq al-Talh, where rifles, RPGs, and rockets are reportedly available.³⁷³ The Huthis also buy weapons from government conscripts who claim to have lost them during battles. Other sources included weapons donated to the cause and captured ROY weapons. Propaganda photographs show a captured T-55 tank, M113 armored personal carrier (APC), anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), trucks with mounted weapons (technicals), and a RATEL infantry fighting vehicle (IFV).³⁷⁴

The organic command and control, coupled with local members dedicated to protecting their land and homes, and a large surplus of weapons have given the Huthis an edge in its contest with the government. The command and control would have to change if the Huthis are intent on expanding outside its traditional areas of operations and into Sunni populated areas, since the expansion would not be “defensive” and local recruits to the cause would be limited.

3. Recruitment and Popular Support

As stated earlier, the main recruiting efforts for the BY were religious education, youth study groups, and holiday gatherings (see Chapter II.3.B). After the conflict started, the efforts shifted from recruitment into a religious revival movement into a militia, which requires a significantly more dedicated member.³⁷⁵ There are three levels of supporters: fighters, direct supporters, and sympathizers (popular supporters). Due to

³⁷⁰ IHS Jane's, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” 8.

³⁷¹ *Zakat* —an Islamic charitable tax. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 196.

³⁷² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 36–7.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 37–40.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 199–202.

³⁷⁵ McAdam, “Recruitment to High-Risk Activism,” 64.

the media blackout in the conflict zone and the lack of reliable information³⁷⁶ it is difficult to judge the exact number of the supporters but a general analysis of the available information revels that the Huthis have a fairly high level of support in Sadah governorate, and more recently Amran and Sanaa governorates.

Membership surged to the militant wing of the Huthis after fighting commenced in 2004. The number of fighters is difficult to judge but IHS Jane's estimates the size of the fighting force to be around 6,000. Many reportedly joined out of anger at government bombardment of civilian areas during battles and the looting of property by pro-government tribal militias during military operations.³⁷⁷ One Yemeni parliamentarian observed that the Huthis got stronger after each round as more people joined to defend their villages. A member of the ruling GPC party claimed that most Huthis joined for nonreligious reasons.³⁷⁸

Both the Huthis and the ROY have tried to court tribal sheikhs. At the start of the conflict most supported the government but heavy-handed ROY military operations have driven some into the Huthi camp.³⁷⁹ The Huthis also act as neutral arbitrators in tribal and local disputes to win trust.³⁸⁰ But as Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells finds, “tribal alliances with the [government]—or Huthis—are short-lived, changing with circumstances or *qabili* [(tribal)] assessments of what benefits them at any given time.”³⁸¹ The various tribal militias only cooperate when their interests overlap with the Huthis.³⁸²

Popular support is difficult to measure without polling. The poor conduct of the Yemeni military in counterinsurgency operations, including indiscriminate bombardment

³⁷⁶ Boucek, “War in Saada,” 49–50.

³⁷⁷ IHS Jane's, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” 7.

³⁷⁸ International Crisis Group, “Yemen: Defusing the Saada Time Bomb,” *Middle East Report* 86 (2009), 13, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/yemen/086-yemen-defusing-the-saada-time-bomb.aspx>.

³⁷⁹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 147.

³⁸⁰ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 100.

³⁸¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 162.

³⁸² Ibid., 197.

of civilian areas, and the general socioeconomic marginalization of northwest Yemen has garnered some popular support for the group.³⁸³ At least 3,000 people in Yemen have been arrested for supporting the Huthis.³⁸⁴ Videotaped organized holiday events, where Huthi ideologues give speeches, reveal that thousands travel to remote areas to listen to Huthi speakers.³⁸⁵ The videos suggest a large support base in Sadah governorate. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells assert that the Huthis attract three types of supporters. First, the religiously inclined are attracted to the pro-Zaydi message. The second group, with a more tribal outlook, is attracted to the group because they want to defend their homeland from the ROY military. Finally, a politically motivated group is drawn to the pro-republican nature of the Huthis.³⁸⁶ During the “Arab Spring” the Huthis were able to attract new supporters from the young, educated, urban class.³⁸⁷ The Huthis made up approximately ten percent of the protestors in Sanaa’s change square.³⁸⁸

Polling data on Yemen is limited. The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), a local institute that has partnered with Gallop, the United Nations, and the World Bank, released data in July 2014 detailing the popular perceptions of security and insecurity in Yemen.³⁸⁹ A significantly less detailed report was published in 2012 and 2013, making a trend analysis of the conflict time frame (2004–2014) impossible.³⁹⁰ Yet the 2013 and 2014 poll still provides insight in popular support or lack thereof of the Huthis. First, while controlling the entire Sadah governorate since 2011, the Huthis are perceived as the top source of security problems by the populace in Sadah. Only 14 percent of the locals perceive Huthis as providing security as opposed to tribes (28 percent) or local notables or citizens (39 percent), suggesting the “control” of Sadah maybe not be as strong as

³⁸³ IHS Jane’s, “Al-Shabab al-Muminiin,” 7.

³⁸⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 2.

³⁸⁵ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 218.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 234.

³⁸⁷ Winter, “Wake of the Arab Spring,” 16.

³⁸⁸ International Crisis Group, “Popular Protest in North Africa & the Middle East (II): Yemen between Reform and Revolution,” *Middle East/North Africa Report*, no. 102 (2011): 4.

³⁸⁹ Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”

³⁹⁰ Yemen Polling Center, “The State of Security in Yemen;” Yemen Polling Center, “Public Perceptions of the Security Sector.”

previously believed. The government is cited by no citizens as a provider of security. It is also possible that the tribes and local notables are allied or are working with the Huthis. While popular support cannot be determined from the poll it can be inferred that the 28 percent of the population that named the Huthis as the primary source of insecurity are not loyal to the organization. Another 16 percent blame the government for Sadah's insecurity but they could be loyal to anyone, including the government, which is not present in Sadah. Polling also shows that the Huthis provided some security in al-Jawf and Marib governorate.³⁹¹

The tribal and sectarian nature of the Huthis limits mass popular support in Yemen.³⁹² As the Huthis expand control out of traditional Zaydi areas, it will likely face resistance from the local tribal populations. There have been reported clashes between Huthis and tribes after the Huthis tried to operate in tribal areas not allied with the Huthis.³⁹³ Since the conflict with the government broke out 2004, the Huthi's greatest limitation in drawing in mass support is its current lack of social welfare wing common in other insurgent groups. This deficiency is probably due to lack of funding.³⁹⁴

4. International Support

The Yemeni government alleges that a variety of outside actors support the Huthi rebels. The government has listed Iran, Hezbollah, (Gaddafi's) Libya, Iraq, and Eritrea as sources of international support.³⁹⁵ The major source of international support is Iran. An unnamed U.S. official alleged that Quds Force operatives³⁹⁶ were smuggling small and medium sized arms and explosives into Yemen via small boats through the Red Sea coast. Shortly afterward the U.S.-trained Yemeni Coast Guard interdicted a boat smuggling arms including antiaircraft missiles.³⁹⁷ While the Huthis and Iran have always

³⁹¹ Soudias and Transfeld, "Mapping Popular Perceptions."

³⁹² IHS Jane's, "Al-Shabab al-Muminiin," 7.

³⁹³ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, Regime and Periphery, 138, 141.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 238.

³⁹⁵ Winter, "Conflict in Yemen," 109.

³⁹⁶ Quds Force—clandestine branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

³⁹⁷ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 7–8.

denied any ties,³⁹⁸ Iran provides political, in addition to material support, to the Huthis.³⁹⁹ In 2009, Iranian's foreign minister and speaker of the parliament both declared that Iran is activity involved in Yemen's "internal security."⁴⁰⁰ No evidence of any other type of support by any other country has been provided by the Yemeni government. Policy analysts believe that the claims of outside assistance are exaggerated, intended to increase aid from the Gulf States.⁴⁰¹

Overall, international support for the Huthis appears to be low. With the exception of probable regular weapons shipments from Iran the Huthis receive little else.⁴⁰² Byman lists five sources of assistance that outside states can offer including, arms and money, a safe haven, diplomatic and political assistance, and direct military support.⁴⁰³ There are no reports of Iranian direct military support. The distance from Yemen to Iran limits the utility of a safe haven. Even if Huthis could travel to Iran for training, the Huthis have thousands of battle-hardened veterans—the group hardly need basic guerrilla training. It would be more helpful if Quds Force agents traveled to Yemen to provide specialized training. It is also clear that Iran does not provide much monetary assistance as evident by the Huthis lack of a strong social welfare wing.⁴⁰⁴ The diplomatic and political assistance are also limited, because Iran's international relations with Europe, North Africa, and South-West Asia, and North America are strained.⁴⁰⁵ According to Clark, Iran did name a street "The Martyrs of Sadah Street," but this does little to help the Huthi cause.⁴⁰⁶

398 IHS Jane's, "Al-Shabab al-Muminiin," 2.

399 Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 18.

400 Zuhair al Harithi, "Understanding Yemen's Troubles: A Saudi Perspective," *Arab Insight* 2 no. 7 (2010), 83.

401 Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 7–8.

402 Kenneth Katzman, "Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 39.

403 Bymen et al., *Outside Support for Insurgent*, xvii–xix.

404 Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 238.

405 Ariel Farrar-Wellman and Will Fulton, "Foreign Relations," American Enterprise Institute, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations>.

406 Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 257.

Iran's ties are also limited by the differences in Shia religious practices since the Huthis are wary of conversion efforts.⁴⁰⁷

5. Territorial Gains and Losses

The Huthis control large swaths of northwest and central Yemen as of October 2014. During the six rounds of the Huthi conflict, the Huthis did not secure control over territory (liberated zones) until the fourth round.⁴⁰⁸ By the end of the sixth round, the Huthis were in control of several districts in Sadah.⁴⁰⁹ The weakening of state during the Arab Spring allowed the Huthis to cement control over the rest of Sadah.⁴¹⁰ The Huthis were able to reach an agreement with non-Huthi notables in Sadah who collectively choose the non-Huthi Faris Man'a as governor of Sadah. The governorate is reportedly the most stable it has been in a decade.⁴¹¹ In late 2014 the Huthis took advantage of a weak government and hostile (yet weak) opposition to take control of most of northwest Yemen.⁴¹² At the time of the writing the Huthis are still on the offensive. The Huthis claim these gains are locally driven, with locals allying themselves with the Huthis—but pushes into Sunni areas raise doubts on this narrative.⁴¹³

C. AL QAEDA IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

We bring to our nation the good news that the mujahedeen passed the stage of defense and repulsion of the aggression to the stage where they can take the initiative and attack.

—Hamil al-Misk in *The Echo of Epic Battles*⁴¹⁴

Despite also operating in Yemen, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is quite different than the Huthis. First, the AQAP, descended from a line of Jihadi-Salafists

⁴⁰⁷ Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 156; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 112.

⁴⁰⁸ Boucek, "War in Saada," 52–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 143–8.

⁴⁰⁹ Boucek, "War in Saada," 54–6; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 154–7.

⁴¹⁰ Winter, "Wake of the Arab Spring," 14–6.

⁴¹¹ Winter, "Ansar of Yemen."

⁴¹² Al-Sakkaf, "Houthi Take Hodeia."

⁴¹³ International Crisis Group, "The Huthis," i.

⁴¹⁴ Hamil al-Misk quoted in Harris, "Exploiting Grievances," 33.

dedicated to violence and terrorism. They only later developed from a terrorist group to an insurgent group—that engages in terrorism. Second, the organizational structure of AQAP is what the Council on Foreign Relations calls “heretical, compartmentalized, and decentralized.”⁴¹⁵ Third, the base of the AQAP is much smaller, since Salafists make up only a small minority in Yemen. AQAP relies more heavily on foreign fighters because of this and there international agenda. Finally, al Qaeda is far less successful than the Huthis in controlling territory.

1. Strategies and Developments

The strategies and developments of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) can be broken into two phases. The first phase, which started with the creation of al Qaeda in the South Arabian Peninsula after the 2006 prison break, was characterized by terrorist attacks designed to undermine the legitimacy of the Yemeni government.⁴¹⁶ This differs significantly from the Huthis’ defensive guerrilla warfare. The second phase started during the Arab Spring, when AQAP formed Ansar al-Shariah (ASY) and started an insurgency to capture towns in southern Yemen. Since the main focus of this study is insurgency, this section is about the second phase.

The second phase of development saw AQAP shift from being exclusively a clandestine organization conducting terrorist operations, to an insurgent group interested in capturing and administrating territory. This began in late 2010, just before the Arab Spring, but picked up the pace in the wake of the protests. While AQAP and ASY have effectively fought the military and captured towns in southern Yemen, success has been fleeting. Independent-minded tribes do not want to live under what a ASY leader proclaimed as the “Taliban way” version of Shariah law.⁴¹⁷

The full insurgency started when al Qaeda militants seized a town in southern Yemen. Under the banner of AQAP, the town of Lawder (see Figure 5) was infiltrated then captured on 19 August 2010. The implementation of the brutal form of shariah law

⁴¹⁵ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 3.

⁴¹⁶ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 26–8.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 36.

was reported by fleeing townspeople, but rule only lasted a few days. The Yemeni military expelled the militants on 25 August. The citizens of Lawder then formed a Popular Committee militia to defend the town.⁴¹⁸ The next month, AQAP captured Hawta, but this time it refused to let 12,000 residents leave in order to use them as human shields to prevent Yemeni artillery operations. Nonetheless, the military recaptured Hawta a few days later.⁴¹⁹

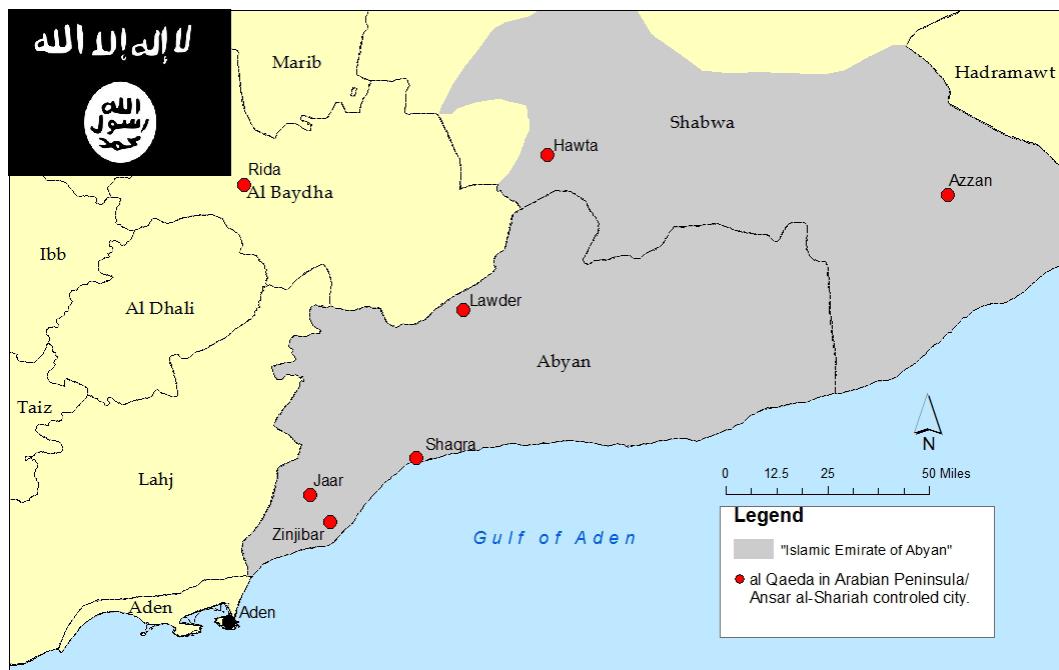


Figure 5. Al Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al Shariah Insurgency 2011–2012.⁴²⁰

After the start of the Arab Spring in Yemen, beginning in February 2011, AQAP announced the formation of Ansar al-Shariah (ASY). ASY massed its forces, 1000

⁴¹⁸ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–7; Fawaz al-Haidari, “Yemen army ‘regains control’ of southern town,” AFP, August 25, 2012.

⁴¹⁹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 37–8; Christopher Boucek, “The Evolving terrorist threat in Yemen,” *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 3, no. 9 (September 2010), 5–7. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss92.pdf>.

⁴²⁰ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–52; al-Haidari, “Yemen Army ‘Regains Control’ of Southern Town;” Christopher Boucek, “The Evolving Terrorist Threat in Yemen,” *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 3, no. 9 (September 2010), 5–7. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss92.pdf>.

strong, and captured the southern towns of Jaar in March 2011, and Abyan provisional capital Zinjibar in May. Only the 25 Mechanized Brigade held out, under siege in its base, with supplies air dropped by the U.S. In January 2012, ASY captured the town of Rida and emptied the prison there before departing. In February, ASY launched a surprise attack killing 185, and capturing 70 soldiers outside Zinjibar. ASY attacked Lawder a second time, but the local Popular Committee and the Yemeni military held them off. AQAP/ASY military commander (and *USS Cole* conspirer) was shortly after killed in an air strike. President Hadi launched a major offensive in May 2012, with 20,000 troops, thousands of Saudi-funded Popular Committee militiamen, and joint Yemen Air Force and Yemeni Naval operations. The operation was successful, and by June the Yemeni military had liberated Zinjibar, Jaar, Shaqra and Azzan. After ASY's defeat AQAP reverted to terrorist tactics.⁴²¹ AQAP kept a low profile for most of 2013, and many members "slipped back into normal society," according to Andrew Michaels and Sakhr Ayyash.⁴²²

During the first and second phase, AQAP continued the "war" against America announced by bin Laden in 1996.⁴²³ These attacks include the Christmas Day underwear bomber and the parcel bomb plot.⁴²⁴ In August 2013 dozens of American Embassies across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia were closed due to an AQAP plot.⁴²⁵

The tactics used by AQAP/ASY in the second phase include standard guerilla and terrorist operations such as: ambushes; published "death lists" of government officials, the use of human shields against Yemeni military forces,⁴²⁶ infiltrating a town before

⁴²¹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 37–52.

⁴²² IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 8; Andrew Michaels and Sakhr Ayyash, "AQAP's Resilience in Yemen," *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 6, no. 9 (September 2013), 12.

⁴²³ Usamah bin Muhammad bin Laden, The Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places (Expel the Infidels from the Arab Peninsula), trans. Muhammad A. S. Al-Mass'ari (1996) http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military-july-dec96-fatwa_1996/.

⁴²⁴ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 53–54.

⁴²⁵ Masters and Laub, "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," 1.

⁴²⁶ AQAP refused to let civilians evacuate combat zones. Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 37–8.

taking it over, suicide bombings, hit-and-run raids, assassinations of government and tribal officials, and murdering civilians.⁴²⁷

2. Organization and Resources

AQAP “is heretical, compartmentalized, and decentralized” according to reporting from the Council on Foreign Relations.⁴²⁸ The organization is led by *emir*⁴²⁹ Nasir al-Wuhayshi former aide-de-camp of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan.⁴³⁰ Since taking command Wuhayshi strived to emulate his mentor bin Laden and designed a robust organization that could withstand the deaths of leaders, unlike the previous al Qaeda in Yemen (AQY). Wuhayshi also tried (but failed) to overcome mistakes made by previous jihadists and minimize civilian causalities and only attack legitimate targets.⁴³¹ In addition to being the *emir* of AQAP, he was also appointed the general manager of al Qaeda Core (AQC) by Ayman al-Zawahiri. His responsibility as general manager is to coordinate the operations of al Qaeda affiliates.⁴³²

Ansar al-Shariah, the “rebranded” AQAP, acts as AQAP’s insurgent wing and when in control of village or town establishes shariah courts, administers social services, and repairs broken infrastructure.⁴³³ Wuhayshi said that AQAP was “try[ing] to win [the populace] over through the conveniences of life...”⁴³⁴ The areas under ASY administration are part of the so-called “Islamic Emirate of Abyan.”⁴³⁵ ASY forces focus on local issues and the near enemy while AQAP still tries to attack the far enemy.

⁴²⁷ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–52.

⁴²⁸ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.

⁴²⁹ *emir*—commander or prince; commander in al Qaeda.

⁴³⁰ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.

⁴³¹ Gregory D. Johnsen, “A Profile of AQAP’s Upper Echelon,” *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 5, no. 7 (July 2012), 7. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-profile-of-aqaps-upper-echelon>.

⁴³² Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”3.

⁴³³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 3; Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”4.

⁴³⁴ IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 3.

⁴³⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 3; Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,”4.

AQAP models its hierarchical structure on AQC. The *emir* leads the organization with a secretary and *shura* council under him. The heads of the various departments sit on the *shura* council. AQAP differs from AQC in that it features regional emirs with a similar hierarchical under them. Figure 6 depicts this structure.⁴³⁶

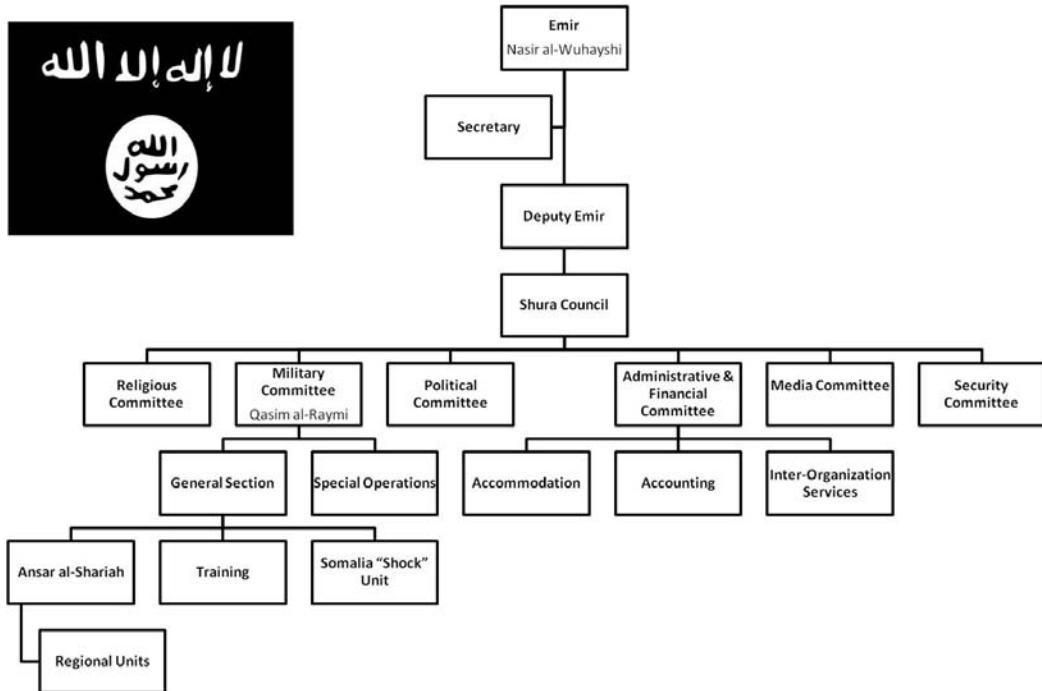


Figure 6. Theoretical al Qaeda Organizational Structure in the Arabian Peninsula.⁴³⁷

AQAP receives funding from both Yemeni and external sources. In Yemen, AQAP raises funds for its operations through kidnapping ransoms, bank robberies, drug

⁴³⁶ IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 19; Rohan Gunaratna and Aviv Oreg, "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and its Evolution," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 12 (2010): 1055, doi:10.1080/1057610X.2010.523860.

⁴³⁷ IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 19; Gunaratna and Oreg, "Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure," 1055; Johnsen, "A Profile of AQAP's," 7; Christopher Swift, "Arc of Convergence: AQAP, Ansar al-Shari'a and the Struggle for Yemen," *Counter Terrorism Center Sentinel* 5, no. 6 (June 2012), 3–6, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/arc-of-convergence-aqap-ansar-al-sharia-and-the-struggle-for-yemen>.

profits, and fraudulent charities.⁴³⁸ AQAP allegedly controls some drug smuggling routes through al-Jawf to Saudi Arabia.⁴³⁹ The major external source of money comes from rich Saudi donors.⁴⁴⁰

AQAP and ASY are heavily armed and possess military grade weapons and vehicles much like the Huthis. Ansar al-Shariah forces captured a number of tanks, artillery pieces, and armored vehicles during battles in Abyan. The group distributed a video featuring a “military parade” in Jaar.⁴⁴¹ Small arms are readily available in Yemen and AQAP likely buys what it need on the weapons market. AQAP also manufactures sophisticated improvised explosive devices.⁴⁴²

3. Recruitment and Popular Support

The main recruiting efforts for AQAP are the mosque, the tribe and social ties, and later the Internet (see Chapter II.C.3). This section will focus mainly on the recruitment and makeup of the fighters. Information on direct supporters and sympathizers (popular supporters) was not available. Due to the clandestine and violent nature of al Qaeda, there are probably fewer direct supporters and sympathizers than fighters/operatives. This differs from the Huthis which have always actively recruited non-fighters.

At the time of the creation of AQAP, the State Department’s Bureau of Counterterrorism estimated that AQAP had several hundred members.⁴⁴³ As of 2014, the State Department estimated the strength had risen to 1000—far less than the number of Huthi fighters.⁴⁴⁴ The bulk of AQAP fighter comes from five sources. First are the leaders, made up of Yemenis that escaped prison and formed the new al Qaeda in South

⁴³⁸ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 3–4; U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*.

⁴³⁹ Koehler-Derrick, *False Foundation*, 103.

⁴⁴⁰ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,” 4.

⁴⁴¹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 43–4.

⁴⁴² IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 12–3.

⁴⁴³ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2010*.

⁴⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*.

Arabian Peninsula in 2006. They are generally experienced, having fought in other Jihadi-Salafist groups. Second group is made up of Saudi al Qaeda members that escaped the kingdom and merged with AQASAP to form AQAP. The third wave of recruits came from jihadists returning from the Iraq War. The fourth group comes from locally recruited Yemenis, most joining the ASY militia starting in 2011. They join because they are disillusioned with the government or their tribal leadership. They are also relatively well paid by AQAP. In Ansar al Shariah’s “Islamic Emirate of Abyan” an estimated 70 percent of the fighters were Yemeni tribal in origin but from outside Abyan.⁴⁴⁵ Finally the last group loyal to al-Wuhayshi are other foreign fighters including a large detachment from the allied al Shabab, other Arabs, Pakistanis, and Afghanis.⁴⁴⁶ As of 2010, the estimated breakdown of AQAP was 56 percent Yemeni, 37 percent Saudi, and 7 percent other foreigners.⁴⁴⁷

Another recruitment strategy of AQAP is to indoctrinate and radicalize “homegrown violent extremists” to attack in their countries of residence so AQAP does not have to spend resources on the difficult task of sending AQAP members to the west to carry out terrorist operations.⁴⁴⁸ Anwar al-Awlaki was the prime international recruiter for AQAP. He is linked to the underwear bomber and the Ft. Hood shooter. He was killed in September 2011.⁴⁴⁹ Inspiring attacks in foreign countries allows AQAP to extend its terrorist goals with little cost to group.

Yemen Polling Center found limited numbers of Yemenis answered that AQAP or ASY provides security in their area. Only a small number of people in Marib said that AQAP/ASY was the primary source of security. Throughout Yemen the jihadists are viewed one of the main sources of insecurity.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁵ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 26–8; Swift, “Arc of Convergence,” 3–4.

⁴⁴⁶ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 28, 31; IHS Jane’s, “AQAP,” 5.

⁴⁴⁷ Harris, “Exploiting Grievances,” 33.

⁴⁴⁸ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 4.

⁴⁴⁹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 54–56.

⁴⁵⁰ Soudias and Transfeld, “Mapping Popular Perceptions.”

Popular support has been rather elusive for AQAP. First, AQAP/ASY's conduct has limited popular support. The brutal form of shariah law enacted by ASY includes punishments listed by Terrill as "crucifixions, public beheadings, amputations, and floggings" only manage to alienate the organization from the general population.⁴⁵¹ Nasir al-Wuhayshi's policy of trying to minimize civilian causalities and only target legitimate targets in order to gain popular support was put to test after AQAP members stormed a military hospital killing 45 Yemenis and seven foreigners. AQAP released a video of fighters killing unarmed doctors and nurses. The outrage against the perceived massacre caused al Qaeda to release an apology and the group offered to pay blood money to the victims' families. AQAP blamed the attack on a rogue cell.⁴⁵² This incident either shows a lack of centralized control of AQAP elements or a poorly planned attack that backfired for the group.

Popular support was a major concern for Usama bin Laden. Documents found during the raid on his compound in Pakistan showed that he was troubled that the al Qaeda brand had been harmed by the brutal actions of the al Qaeda affiliates. He was also upset that AQAP shifted focus to attacking the Yemeni government. Bin Laden was afraid that AQAP was repeating the same mistakes that al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) made. He did not think AQAP had enough popular support to take over territory. It is also clear from his notes that AQC has little control over AQAP.⁴⁵³ The extreme sectarian nature, brutal version of Shariah law implemented in the Islamic Emirate of Abyan, and violent nature of the group limits mass popular support in Yemen.

4. International Support

There are no credible reports of AQAP receiving official assistance from any country. The Yemeni government under President Saleh alleged that AQAP was a member of a quadripartite alliance with the Huthis, Iran, and Libya. No evidence was

⁴⁵¹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, x.

⁴⁵² Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 4; "Al Qaeda Branch in Yemen Regrets Hospital Attack," *New York Times*, December 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/23/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-branch-in-yemen-apologizes-for-attack-on-hospital-at-defense-ministry.html>.

⁴⁵³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 30, 32–4.

provided and AQAP are at war with the Huthis⁴⁵⁴ making the claim doubtful. AQAP does have relationships with other terrorist organizations. The closest and relationship is with Somalia's al Shabab. AQAP and al Shabab have an alliance and al Shabab openly declared it was reinforcing AQAP in southern Yemen. ROY security forces reportedly arrested 29 Somalis working with AQAP during a two month period in 2012. The Yemeni and Somali governments each estimate 300 al Shabab members are fighting in Yemen alongside AQAP.⁴⁵⁵

5. Territorial Gains and Losses

Al Qaeda's ability to capture, control, and administrate territory has thus far been limited. Currently AQAP/ASY can better be described as working in "areas of influence" rather than areas on under its control. This differs significantly from the Huthis. At its height in early 2012 though ASY controlled parts of Abyan and Shabwa governorates. AQAP only administered the so-called Islamic Emirate of Abyan from March 2011 to June 2012.⁴⁵⁶ Lucas Winter judges that AQAP/ASY does not have the capacity to control territory yet and are probably content with building grassroots support at this time.⁴⁵⁷

D. CONCLUSION

In sum, there are some key differences between the Huthis and AQAP insurgencies that make the Huthi insurgency more effective than al Qaeda's. First, while Jihadi-Salafism has a history in Yemen that dates back to the 1980s, the Believing Youth/Huthis have a longer continuous movement. Additionally, the Huthis' development differed because the movement started as a peaceful social movement, evolved into to a resistance group, then into an insurgency over the course of two decades. AQAP in Yemen is known foremost for its violence and terrorism, only recently turning into an insurgent force. Second, the Huthis organizational structure favors their group over al Qaeda in Yemen. The "tribal confederation"-type structure brings allies

⁴⁵⁴ Winter, "Ansar of Yemen."

⁴⁵⁵ IHS Jane's, "AQAP," 5.

⁴⁵⁶ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 35–52.

⁴⁵⁷ Winter, "Ansar of Yemen."

together with common interests allowing for a broad base of support. The recent addition of President Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) to the pro-Huthi camp is probably a marriage of convenience, but it highlights the pragmatic nature of the group. This pragmatism is also highlighted with the alliance with the Revolutionary Youth and Hirak. Ultimately, the sectarian nature of the Huthis will limit the Huthis' growth and tribal allies might quit the alliance if the threat of Ali Muhsin is removed. AQAP on the other hand, is still organized in a classic "al Qaeda" hierarchical structure that follows normal insurgent theory. Al Qaeda often finds resistance to their rule by locals. This relates to point three, the Huthis rely mostly on locals to fight in their home areas while AQAP relies heavily on outsiders, either from foreign countries or other parts of Yemen to run and fight for the short-lived Islamic Emirate of Abyan. This gives the Huthis the advantage in knowledge of terrain and motivation to fight. This advantage disappears as the Huthis leave their traditional Zaydi base in the northern Yemen highlands. All these factors help explain the Huthis more successful territorial gains.

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V. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COUNTERINSURGENCY/COUNTERTERRORISM POLICIES

“As President, I have made it a priority to strengthen our partnership with the Yemeni government—training and equipping their security forces, sharing intelligence, and working with them to strike al-Qaeda terrorists.”⁴⁵⁸

—President Barack Obama, January 2010.

A. INTRODUCTION

International support for Yemen’s counterinsurgency efforts will be essential for ending Yemen’s insurgencies. In *Five Front War* Daniel Byman argues that “critical alliance partners” are vital for both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts. Allies can “provide training for security services, money for reconstruction, expertise to rebuild an infrastructure, and help establish the rule of law.”⁴⁵⁹ International support is not without its drawbacks, as assistance from the U.S. or outside powers can undermine Yemen’s legitimacy and embolden opponents.⁴⁶⁰ This was demonstrated by the Huthis during the 2003 Iraq War protests.⁴⁶¹ Instead of large numbers of foreign troops Byman suggests that the use of special operation forces (SOF) to train military, police, and intelligence services.⁴⁶²

For this chapter, since my measure of “success” is the simple control of territory, I will consider actions by international supporters with this measure in mind. Did the supporters’ actions help Yemen regain control of territory, or at least deny territory from insurgents? There are four forms of aid related to international support for COIN/CT policies; monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity and military support. Quantifying support is difficult. Money can of course be represented in raw numbers but it does not explain how it is used or if it used for the intended propose.

⁴⁵⁸ President Barak Obama, quoted in Terrill, *Struggles for Yemen*, 1.

⁴⁵⁹ Byman, *Five Front War*, 195.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 191, 194–5, 202.

⁴⁶¹ Novak, “Comparative Counterinsurgency,” 15; Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 107.

⁴⁶² Byman, *Five Front War*, 214–5.

Political/diplomatic aid can be analyzed by important acts. For example, naming a group a terrorist organization in a third country will hinder the group's support activities in that country. Intelligence sharing and covert activity is impossible to measure by its very nature and reporting relies on leaks. Finally, military support, especially direct military action, is the easiest to measure for this report.

The Republic of Yemen (ROY) receives assistance from the U.S. and various regional allies. The Houthi and al Qaeda conflicts in Yemen concern not only the Yemeni government but regional and world powers. The U.S., the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and to a lesser extent the state of Qatar and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have assisted Yemen's efforts to bring stability and peace to its territory. In the battle against al Qaeda, ROY, the U.S., KSA, and Jordan share a common enemy.⁴⁶³ Yemen tried to link the Houthi war with the "global war on terror" (GWOT) and pressured the U.S. and EU to list the Huthis as a terrorist group.⁴⁶⁴ Under former President Saleh, Clark claims that "the U.S. and all the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] were at pains to reiterate their support for Yemen's integrity under Saleh's rule, and overlooked his highly dubious presentation of both the al-Houthi and [Hirak] as additional fronts in the old 'War on Terror'."⁴⁶⁵ The United States does not consider the Huthis a terrorist organization which limits the type of support it provides (see Table 1). Saudi Arabia has designated the Huthis as a terrorist organization and fought a brief border skirmish against the group. The U.S. and KSA consider AQAP a terrorist organization (see Table 2).⁴⁶⁶ Qatar has acted as a neutral mediator in the Houthi wars.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶³ IHS Jane's, "Al Qaeda." *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, last modified 23 June 2014. <https://janes.ihs.com.libproxy.nps.edu/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=Reference&ItemId=+++1320791&Pubabbrev=JWIT>.

⁴⁶⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182.

⁴⁶⁵ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 256.

⁴⁶⁶ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, August 2014), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>; Reuters, "Saudi Arabia Designates Muslim Brotherhood Terrorist Group," Reuters, March 7, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/07/us-saudi-security-idUSBREA260SM20140307>; IHS Jane's, "Al-Shabab al-Muminiin.

⁴⁶⁷ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 20–1.

Table 1. International Support for Yemen's COIN/CT Policies.

	Monetary Aid	Political Diplomatic	Intelligence/Covert Activity	Military Support
U.S.	AQAP only	Both	AQAP only	Training and Direct action against AQAP
KSA	Both	Both	Both	Direct action against both
Jordan	None	Supports Unity	Unknown	Training
Qatar	Promised money for Sadah	Huthi Peace Process	None	None

Table 2. Designated Terrorist Organizations.

	Yemen	Saudi Arabia ⁴⁶⁸	U.S. ⁴⁶⁹	UN ⁴⁷⁰	EU ⁴⁷¹
Huthis	X	X			
AQAP	X	X	X	X	X

B. SAUDI ARABIAN SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COIN/CT

Saudi Arabia provides support for ROY's COIN/CT policies with monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity, and military support. Sharing a 900-mile long border with Yemen, Saudi Arabia arguably has the strongest interest in stability in Yemen.⁴⁷² Saudi Arabia has also recently developed a special relationship with Yemen after the 2000 Jeddah treaty demarcated their borders, and is Yemen's largest provider in foreign aid.⁴⁷³ A sociocultural element linking the two countries are

⁴⁶⁸ "Saudi Arabia Designates."

⁴⁶⁹ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*.

⁴⁷⁰ United Nations, "The List Established and Maintained by the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee with Respect to Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Other Entities Associated with Al-Qaida," last modified September 23, 2014, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/AQList.htm#alqaedaent>.

⁴⁷¹ The EU automatically lists any organization listed by the UN.

⁴⁷² Colonel Hassan Abosaq (KSA), "The Implications of Unstable Yemen on Saudi Arabia," (Master's thesis, U.S. Army War College), 1; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 75; "Yemen," *The World Factbook*.

⁴⁷³ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, x, 17–20; Hull, *High-Value Target*, 88.

tribes found in both countries that often view tribal loyalties above national loyalties.⁴⁷⁴ Both AQAP and the Huthis have attacked the Saudi Arabia in the past and are viewed as direct threats to the kingdom's government.⁴⁷⁵ Saudi Arabia responded with direct military action against both the Huthi rebels and AQAP.⁴⁷⁶ The monarchy views the Huthi movement in the context of KSA-Iranian or Sunni-Shia cold war. KSA fear Iran is creating a “Shia crescent” to encroach and threaten Sunni Gulf countries. The Huthis are feared to become an Iranian pawn to destabilize the gulf countries.⁴⁷⁷ The cross-border smuggling of contraband, including explosives and heavy weapons, is also a concern to the Saudi government.⁴⁷⁸

While al Qaeda's presence in Saudi was first noted in 2000 with low level attacks on western expats,⁴⁷⁹ the major turning point in Saudi “relations” with al Qaeda was the 2003 assault on the al-Muhaya housing compound in Riyadh. A car bomb was detonated blocks from Prince Mohammed bin Naif's palace killing 17 Arab Muslims including, 5 children. The attack enraged Saudi society, and for the first time clerics began reproving al Qaeda and its tactics. Families turned in their own relatives belonging to al Qaeda, and AQAP-SA went on the run and was largely destroyed by Saudi CT forces in 2006.⁴⁸⁰

Saudi's strong support of the Yemeni government against al Qaeda stems from AQAP's origins with the merger of AQAP-SA and AQSAP and attacks on Saudi interests and officials.⁴⁸¹ AQAP's most spectacular attack in the kingdom was the 2009 attempted assassination of Prince Mohammed bin Naif, KSA's current Minister of the

⁴⁷⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 266.

⁴⁷⁵ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 266; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, x.

⁴⁷⁶ Boucek, “War in Saada,” 45; Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 281.

⁴⁷⁷ Zuhair al Harithi, “Understanding Yemen's Troubles: A Saudi Perspective,” *Arab Insight* 2 no. 7 (2010) 79–81, 82–85. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 171, 268; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 40.

⁴⁷⁸ IHS Jane's, “External Affairs, Yemen,” 5–6.

⁴⁷⁹ IHS Jane's, “AQAP,” 33.

⁴⁸⁰ Johnsen, *Last Refugee*, 197–203.

⁴⁸¹ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, x.

Interior.⁴⁸² In 2012, attempted assassinations of Saudi officials in Yemen failed. Saudi Arabia has provided military and intelligence support to Yemen to combat AQAP. KSA intelligence operatives have reportedly penetrated the organization.⁴⁸³ Jabir al Fayfi, an AQAP member warned Saudi intelligence of ongoing plots which helped avert the 2010 cargo plane bomb plot.⁴⁸⁴ Despite the going unrest in Yemen and the outing of Fayfi as a source, covert Saudi operations against AQAP reportedly continue.⁴⁸⁵

KSA's direct military support during the Abyan Campaign against AQAP and Ansar al Shariah (ASY) proved to be the tipping point that allowed the ROY military and the Popular Committee militia allies to take back Abyan from the insurgents.⁴⁸⁶ During the battle, the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) airdropped supplies to the besieged 25 Mechanized Infantry Brigade. From July to August 2011, RSAF launched numerous air raids to relief pressure on the unit.⁴⁸⁷ KSA also paid a significant portion of the operations costs of the cash-strapped ROY counter-offensive. The kingdom also funded the tribal-based Popular Committee militias.⁴⁸⁸

Saudi Arabia has been actively involved in the Huthi conflict. Funding tribal proxies to fight the Huthis marked the kingdoms entrance into the Huthi conflict. The Saudis allegedly started funding tribal militias and the ROY military shortly after the outbreak of violence in 2004.⁴⁸⁹ Saudi intelligence operators paid tribal sheiks for their loyalty to the Yemen regime. The Saudi agents also made payments to anti-ROY tribes lest they lose influence; a policy dubbed “ryialpoltik.”⁴⁹⁰ An estimated 6000 out of 9000

⁴⁸²Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula;” “Saudi Arabia’s king appoints new interior minister,” *BBC*, 5 November 2012. Accessed September 8, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20209276>.

⁴⁸³ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Saudi: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 13–4.

⁴⁸⁴ Johnsen, *Last Refugee*, 266–7.

⁴⁸⁵ IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 6.

⁴⁸⁶ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, xi.

⁴⁸⁷ Johnsen, *Last Refugee*, 281–2.

⁴⁸⁸ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, xi.

⁴⁸⁹ Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”

⁴⁹⁰ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182; International Crisis Group, “Saada Time Bomb,” 18.

tribal leaders throughout Yemen receive payments from Saudi agents.⁴⁹¹ The Saudi's supposedly spent \$100 million in payments in the sixth round of fighting alone.⁴⁹² The Huthis allege that kingdom also provides matériel to the Yemeni government evident by "made in KSA" stamps on unexploded ordinance littering Sadah the country-side.⁴⁹³

The Sadah War came to Saudi Arabian soil in November 2009. KSA allowed ROY forces to transit through Saudi territory to flank Huthi militiamen. In retaliation, Huthi insurgents crossed into Saudi Arabia and killed several border guards then seized two border villages and two mountains. Saudi clerics declared defensive jihad and the Saudi military quickly deployed to border to expel the Huthis.⁴⁹⁴ The events that followed can be described more as an internationalized intrastate conflict than support for COIN/CT policy.⁴⁹⁵ The terrain along the border was mountainous on the Yemeni side with foothills and plains on the KSA side.⁴⁹⁶ Saudi tactics involved heavy artillery and air bombardment of Huthi positions to kill and weaken as many fighters as possible followed by dismounted infantry engagements.⁴⁹⁷ The RSAF crossed the border to bomb Huthi rear positions. The Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) blockaded Yemen's Red Sea coast to prevent arms smuggling.⁴⁹⁸ One hundred thirty-three Saudi soldiers died and an unknown number were injured and captured. The Huthis retreated from the KSA in early 2010. In February 2010, a positive development occurred in the Sadah War. Saudi mediators succeeded in negotiating a cease-fire between the ROY and Huthis, ending Saudi's direct involvement and the sixth round of conflict. Qatar latter expanded on the

⁴⁹¹ Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 219. IHS Jane's, "External Affairs, Yemen," 5.

⁴⁹² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 222.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 224.

⁴⁹⁴ Boucek, "War in Saada," 56–7. Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 19; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 155–6.

⁴⁹⁵ Boucek, "War in Saada," 45.

⁴⁹⁶ Google Maps, "Al Khobh, Jazan, Saudi Arabia," accessed September 10, 2014. <https://www.google.com/maps>.

⁴⁹⁷ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 19–20.

⁴⁹⁸ Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 18–19.

ceasefire.⁴⁹⁹ The military efforts of the KSA have been viewed as encouraging the Huthis into finally accepting a lasting cease fire with ROY.⁵⁰⁰

Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi (the Saudi version of Salafism) proselytization in Yemen, including in the Zaydi heartland of Sadah, has been destabilizing and was a major factor in the Huthi rebellion.⁵⁰¹ The Believing Youth may not have mobilized if Saudis were not trying to convert the Zaydi population.⁵⁰² Zuhair al Harthi, a member of Saudi's Shura Council publicly raised concerns that Salafists will extinguish the moderate (Sunni) Shafi'i school and destabilize Yemen.⁵⁰³ Salafists have reportedly taken over the control of mosques through arms since at least the early 1990s. Salafists have also tried to prevent Zaydis from celebrating the Shia holiday of Id al-Ghadir.⁵⁰⁴ Whether it was the intention or not, Saudi's proselytization activities have been destabilizing in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia's interests, which are arguably linked to a stable Yemen, have caused the KSA to militarily engage both AQAP, and aid Yemen with intelligence sharing and funding.⁵⁰⁵ Saudi's military efforts helped end AQAP/ASY's hold in Abyan and ended the fiercest fighting in the north.⁵⁰⁶ Saudi activities have also destabilized Yemen. Salafist proselytization activities were a factor in destabilizing the north and Saudi's payments to tribes fund the war economy.⁵⁰⁷ Joost R. Hiltermann argues that the conflict will only be resolved by focusing diplomatically on ending the conflicts by

⁴⁹⁹ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 19–20.

⁵⁰⁰ Winter. “Ansar of Yemen.”

⁵⁰¹ Hull, *High Value Target*, 112–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 89.

⁵⁰² Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 22.

⁵⁰³ al Harithi, “A Saudi Perspective,” 80.

⁵⁰⁴ Weir, “Clash of Fundamentalisms,” 22.

⁵⁰⁵ al Harithi, “A Saudi Perspective,” 79–80; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182, 266; Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, X, 25; Blanchard, *Saudi: Background*, 13–4.

⁵⁰⁶ Winter. “Ansar of Yemen.”; Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, xi.

⁵⁰⁷ Hull, *High-Value Target*, 112–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 89; Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”

helping Yemen address the “social, political, and religious grievances” that drive the conflicts.⁵⁰⁸ Such efforts could undermine popular support for the Huthis and al Qaeda.

C. U.S. SUPPORT FOR YEMEN COIN/CT

The main U.S. foreign policy goal for Yemen is the elimination of transnational terrorist threats originating in Yemen.⁵⁰⁹ Under Presidents Bush and Obama the main U.S. CT strategy for Yemen is to strengthen the capacity of the ROY government to defeat al Qaeda.⁵¹⁰ Another long term CT policy for the U.S. is the economic and political development in Yemen.⁵¹¹ So far the U.S. maintains a “no boots on ground” policy reiterated by President Obama and members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵¹² President Obama created a threefold strategy, adding organizing international support for stabilization efforts, to Bush’s strategy.⁵¹³ This includes working to bring about a peaceful reconciliation in the Huthi conflict. Diplomats have visited Sadah city and made public statements in support of peace.⁵¹⁴

Under President Saleh, the relationship with the U.S. was not always viewed by the U.S. as great, but has improved dramatically under Hadi.⁵¹⁵ Under former President Saleh, some U.S. officials complained that cooperation is not always forthcoming from Yemeni officials. The U.S. officials cited “catch and release” sentences for terrorists, limited sharing of intelligence, and no extradition of suspects to the U.S. W. Andrew Terrill suggests that the regime’s hands are partially tied by the rampant anti-Americanism and a legal system that does not allow extradition. Too much cooperation with the U.S. generates government protests, such as the aforementioned Huthi anti-war

⁵⁰⁸ Hiltermann, “Disorder on the Border.”

⁵⁰⁹ Sharp, *Yemen: Background*, 5; Hull, *High-Value Target*, xxiii.

⁵¹⁰ Novak, *Comparative Counterinsurgency*, 13.

⁵¹¹ IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2; Novak, *Comparative Counterinsurgency*, 13.

⁵¹² Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 58.

⁵¹³ Masters and Laub, “Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.”

⁵¹⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 171.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 126.

protest.⁵¹⁶ Some U.S. officials claimed that the 2006 prison break was an inside job since some Political Security Organization (PSO) employees are former members of the Islamic Jihad of Yemen (IJY).⁵¹⁷ This contentious relationship changed after President Hadi's election. According to former Coordinator for Counterterrorism for the U.S. State Department, Daniel Benjamin, "He [Hadi] is everything his predecessor wasn't in terms of his determination, his understanding of the threat... [and] his determination to destroy Al Qaeda."⁵¹⁸ Since the transition in 2011 the U.S. has paid \$600 million in aid to the regime.⁵¹⁹

The modern CT Yemeni relationship with the U.S. started shortly after 9/11⁵²⁰ when then President Saleh met with President George W. Bush. Saleh came out in support of U.S. GWOT policies, in return for economic and military aid and reduced pressure on certain issues such as democratization.⁵²¹ Saleh also agreed to intelligence sharing, and purportedly allowed a small number of CIA agents to assist the ROY in identifying al Qaeda members hiding in Yemen, according to the Congressional Research Service.⁵²² Shortly after an air strike killed AQY leader al-Harithi (see Chapter II). The air strike lead to a quick collapse of AQY. The air strike caused anti-American protests were so fierce that the U.S. embassy in was forced to evacuate.⁵²³

Shortly after the campaign against AQY started in Yemen, ROY started receiving funding and military matériel including HMMWVs and armored personnel carriers (APCs.) The U.S. also sent SOF trainers under Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions to train the Yemeni Republican Guard (RG), the Central Security Forces-Counterterrorism Unit (CSF-CTU) and the Yemeni Special Operation Forces

⁵¹⁶Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 67–8.

⁵¹⁷Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 10.

⁵¹⁸Daniel Benjamin quoted in Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 9.

⁵¹⁹IHS Jane's, "External Affairs," 2.

⁵²⁰The *USS Cole* investigation was a law enforcement affair, not a CT operation.

⁵²¹Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 124.

⁵²²Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 10.

⁵²³Clark, *Dancing on the Heads*, 196–7.

(YSOF). In addition, the U.S. sent Coast Guard trainers to help establish the Yemeni Coast Guard to thwart contraband smuggling.⁵²⁴

The Christmas 2009 attempted “underwear” bombing of an airline refocused America’s attention to Yemen. After the attack, the U.S. pressured the Yemeni government to target AQAP and not the Huthis, which despite the rhetoric posed little threat to the U.S.⁵²⁵ Shortly afterward, the February 2010 KSA-ROY-Huthi ceasefire went into place, ending the fiercest round of fighting.⁵²⁶ The U.S. increased financial aid from about \$65 million in 2009 to \$200 million in 2011.⁵²⁷ The U.S. also helped equip CT assets including transport aircraft, four HU-1 (*HUEY*) helicopters and upgrades to 10 M-17 (HIP) helicopters and additional HMMWVs.⁵²⁸ The U.S. openly admitted to sending additional intelligence assets to work with the ROY government.⁵²⁹

After the transition from President Saleh to President Hadi, military action against AQAP increased significantly. The use of UAVs in Yemen is no longer secret, although the missions are. In April 2012, the White House publicly stated that the U.S. targets terrorists in Yemen.⁵³⁰ In Yemen President Hadi went so far as to publicly welcome U.S. assistance as part of ROY’s CT strategy.⁵³¹ Despite this support from President Saleh and President Hadi, America remains unpopular in Yemen.⁵³² While acknowledging the deeply unpopular nature of America in Yemen, Terrill argues that air strikes, resupply airdrops, and U.S. military planners helped tip the balance back in favor of the ROY during the Abyan campaign against AQAP, an assertion echoed by AQAP themselves.⁵³³

⁵²⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 125; Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2010), 6, 10; Johnsen, *Last Refuge*, 179–180; Hull, *High-Value Target*, 38, 54, 91.

⁵²⁵ Terrill, *Conflict in Yemen*, iii. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 156.

⁵²⁶ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 19–20.

⁵²⁷ IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2.

⁵²⁸ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 70–1.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵³⁰ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 59–60.

⁵³¹ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 59–60. IHS Jane’s, “External Affairs,” 2.

⁵³² Sharp, *Yemen: Background* (2014), 6.

⁵³³ Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, xi–xii, 40–2, 46–7.

The Huthis are perceived by the U.S. government as a threat to U.S. interests only because the group is destabilizing Yemen, distracting Yemen from the fight against al Qaeda, and are damaging the economic, political, and social fabric in Yemen.⁵³⁴ The Huthis also pose a policy dilemma because CT resources earmarked for the fight against AQAP were being used to fight the Huthis.⁵³⁵ While the U.S. GWOT was designed to combat al Qaeda, Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells suggest that the additional firepower and backing of a powerful ally caused Saleh to over play his hand with the Huthis. He sought to crush the movement instead of negotiating.⁵³⁶ Husayn al-Huthi used, and the Huthi movement continue to use, anti-American rhetoric to rally support for the Huthi cause. The Huthis leveraged this popular anti-Americanism into broad popular support.⁵³⁷ The Huthis first confronted the U.S. during a March 2003 anti-Iraq War march when 4,000 Huthi supporters marched toward the U.S. embassy chanting “Death to America!” The chaotic protests ended with clashes between protestors and Yemeni security forces leaving two dead and many injured.⁵³⁸

The U.S. has successfully helped Yemen defeat AQY and drive AQAP/ASY from its areas of control in Abyan because of the support provided. In addition to direct military action, the U.S. support of ROY includes intelligence, SOF training, and equipment. The tailored program were judged to be a good fit because small, fast units are good for CT operations but are of limited use against insurgents such as the Huthis.⁵³⁹

D. OTHER COUNTRIES—JORDAN AND QATAR

Jordan is Yemen’s strongest non-GCC Arab supporter. Jordan provided special operation training to the YSOF. According to Ambassador Edmund J. Hull (ret.) the Jordanian Special Forces trained the YSOF on the outskirts of Sanaa in a variety of tactics. The training was provided to combat AQY, since the Huthi insurgency had yet to

⁵³⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 272–3.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 274.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 126.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 7, 114–5, 120.

⁵³⁸ Winter, “Conflict in Yemen,” 107. Terrill, *Conflict in Yemen*, 69–70.

⁵³⁹ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 76.

manifest itself. After U.S. Special Forces took over training of the YSOF, the Jordanian Special Forces remained acting as translators.⁵⁴⁰ Jordan's role in Yemen was confined to training. The Islamic Republic of Iran alleged that Jordan was co-belligerent in the war against the Huthis, a charge that Jordan denied.⁵⁴¹

After the Arab Spring, the Yemeni military was restructured with the joint assistance of Jordan and the U.S. Jordan provided the ROY government expertise, and recommended "best practices" of restructuring. Additionally, Jordan sent a military committee of security experts to advise the ROY's Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior. Limited numbers of Yemeni personnel have trained at Jordan's world class King Abdullah II-Special Operations Training Center (KA-SOTC). The KA-SOTC, which was designed with U.S. assistance, serves as a special operation forces training center for Jordan and other Arab nations. Classes are taught in Arabic which makes training easier than taking classes from English-speakers.⁵⁴²

Qatar acted as neutral mediator in Houthi War and labored for peace in northern Yemen.⁵⁴³ Qatar began its role as mediator in the early summer of 2007. The nine point "Doha agreement" was signed on February 1, 2008. The agreement called for a cession of hostilities. The Huthis agreed to disarmament of medium and heavy weapons and respecting the constitution and Sanaa's right to govern. ROY government agreed to political liberalization, reconstruction, and amnesty.⁵⁴⁴ Qatar promised \$300–\$500 million in reconstruction aid. The Doha agreement, signed by both parties, never went into effect and fighting never stopped.⁵⁴⁵ While Qatar's efforts may be noble, there are signs that they may be counterproductive. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells find in their study that

⁵⁴⁰ Hull, *High-value Target*, 38.

⁵⁴¹ "Jordanian commandos join war on Houthi fighters," *Press TV (In English)*, November 21, 2009, <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/111852.html>. (Press TV is Iran's state media company.); "Jordan denies partaking in Saudi operations in Yemen," *Ammon News (In English)*, November 11, 2009, <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleNO=4696#.VAeNgFOM8eU>.

⁵⁴² Terrill, *Struggle for Yemen*, 74–6.

⁵⁴³ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 20–1. Hull, *High Value Target*, 113.

⁵⁴⁴ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 315.

⁵⁴⁵ International Crisis Group, "Saada Time Bomb," 21–2.

the peace process raised expectations, then failed and relapsed into conflict. This proved to be disappointing to parties involved and ordinary Yemenis.⁵⁴⁶

Qatar's second chance for mediation came in August 2010, when building on the success of the February KSA-ROY-Houthi ceasefire Qatar negotiated an “explanatory index” to the original Doha agreement.⁵⁴⁷ The ceasefire proved more durable since confidence measures were undertaken. Yemen released a large number of Houthi prisoners.⁵⁴⁸

E. CONCLUSIONS

A survey of international support for Yemen's COIN/CT efforts to include monetary, political/diplomatic, intelligence sharing/covert activity, and military support reveal a heavy focus on combating al Qaeda from all external parties except Qatar. This is not unexpected, since al Qaeda threatens regional and Western countries. Efforts against al Qaeda have led to uneven results. AQY was destroyed through the joint efforts of Yemen and its allies. AQAP has proven to be more resilient, “upgrading” from a terrorist group to an insurgent group, and challenging the government's authority in Abyan after the near collapse of the government during the Arab Spring. This study has shown that Saudi and American support through financial aid, political pressure, intelligence sharing, and direct military support helped end the AQAP/ASY's reign in southern Yemen—a feat ROY had been unable to accomplish on its own. The Sadah War in the north has proven to be more difficult for the ROY. The Yemenis receive far less support from the international community in combating the Houthi insurgents. The U.S. and Qatar have focused on trying to resolve the conflict peacefully except for the brief border war with Saudi Arabia after a cross border raid. Clearly those efforts have failed, since the Huthis later took control of parts of Northern Yemeni. The international support for Yemen's counterinsurgency against the Huthis has not been successful in preventing the spread of Houthi rule in the north.

⁵⁴⁶ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182.

⁵⁴⁷ Terrill, *Conflicts in Yemen*, 20–1.

⁵⁴⁸ Winter, *Conflict in Yemen*, 113.

The international activity in Yemen also negatively affected Yemen's counterinsurgency. First, the Saudi government's Wahhabi proselytization in Yemen destabilized Sadah and was a major factor in the Huthi rebellion.⁵⁴⁹ Second, the funding of tribal proxies to fight the Huthis, starting shortly after the outbreak of violence in 2004, likely lengthened and expanded the conflict.⁵⁵⁰ Additionally, Saudi's payments to anti-government tribes solely for influence, undermines the Yemeni government and contributes to the war economy.⁵⁵¹ Finally, in the case of the U.S., President Saleh may have over played his hand against the Huthis, thinking the American firepower designed to fight AQAP would help him crush the Zaydis.⁵⁵² It appears that the Huthi conflict may have been prolonged due to international activity in Yemen. Instead of comprise and accommodation, Saleh choose confrontation.

⁵⁴⁹ Hull, *High Value Target*, 112–3; Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 89.

⁵⁵⁰ Hiltermann, "Disorder on the Border."

⁵⁵¹ Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 182; International Crisis Group, "Saada Time Bomb," 18.

⁵⁵² Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, 126.

VI. CONCLUSION

Returning to the original question: Why have Yemen's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism (COIN/CT) polices been less effective against the Huthi movement compared to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)? This paper can now answer with confidence that the military's poor counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies, the international effort to combat AQAP, the Huthis' ability to recruit and mobilize large numbers of followers, and the Huthi leadership's pragmatic alliances gave the Huthis the advantage over AQAP and the Republican of Yemen. Those are not the only factors but they are the most important ones. In this final chapter, the variables will be reexamined with the evidence presented in the earlier chapters.

A. RECRUITING AND MOBILIZING SUPPORTERS

The first variable was the background and development of the Huthis and AQAP (see Chapter II). The comparison of the two movements, using social movement theory, revealed several key differences that may explain why the Huthis have achieved mass support in parts of northern Yemen and AQAP struggles to recruit and mobilize members.

The origins and ideology of the groups are quite different. The Huthis originated as a local, youth Quran study group, the Believing Youth. The group was a reaction to Saudi Arabian proselytization and embraced northern Yemen's "traditional" Zaydi past. The ideology is linked to Zaydi ethics of "justice," and its stated goals are firmly linked to western liberal thought. AQAP on the other hand, originated in international jihadi groups and until recently, the Jihadi-Salafists have focused almost exclusively on attacking the far enemy. The Jihadi-Salafists want to: return to the traditions of the original Muslims (*salaf*); enforce a strict and brutal version of Shariah law; overthrow the Yemeni regime to establish a so-called Islamic State; kill other Muslims, including noncombatants, and establish an "Islamic State." The Huthi Zaydi ideology attracts more followers than the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, although al Qaeda does have a small solid base of support in Yemen.

The Huthis have taken better advantage of political opportunities and threats as they arose. The Huthis created a large base of support before the start of the Sadah War, which many locals saw as self-defense. The BY graduated students for a decade prior to the anti-American and anti-government protests that resulted in a government crackdown. The government crackdown led to growth of the group. More success came during the Arab Spring, when the Huthis consolidated power in Sadah while establishing a vibrant political wing that established ties and supported the Revolutionary Youth and Hirak movement. Finally, the most successful reaction to a political opportunity came when Brig. General Ali Muhsin's soldiers and armed supporters of the Islah clashed with protestors in 2014. Huthi fighters responded to the attack and defeated both parties after large numbers of security forces switched sides and fought with the Huthis. The Huthis then forced President Hadi to sign a power sharing agreement to make the Huthis part of the government. AQAP on the hand used the Arab Spring to change from a clandestine terrorist organization to an insurgent group that also engaged in terrorist tactics. The move was met eventually with force from the Yemeni government, local Popular Committee militias, and international forces including Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

The assessment of the mobilizing structures of the two groups reveals similar structures. Both groups recruited and mobilized members through the mosque and study groups. The study groups allowed for indoctrination and the building of a community. The community for the Huthis was the northern Yemeni Zaydi community and for the Salafists the international *Umma*.⁵⁵³ The Huthis also mobilized supporters at holiday gatherings and the jihadists mobilized at the tribal and Yemeni government level. IJY recruited many fighters in the civil war but most quit after the war was over. AQAP's southern campaign has recruited young men from across Yemen, but repulsed locals with its bloodthirstiness.

Finally, there are notable differences in framing. The Huthis emphasized local grievances and prescribed local solutions, a consistent message. AQAP conversely fused

⁵⁵³ *Umma*—the Islamic collective. Salmoni, Loidolt, and Wells, *Regime and Periphery*, xxv.

local grievances with the pan-Islamic frames, and relied heavily on jihad as the only solution. The mixing of local and pan-Islamic frames often creates a confusing message.

B. EFFECTIVENESS OF YEMENI GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The second variable was effectiveness of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism policies of the Republic of Yemen (see Chapter III). The counterinsurgency and counterterrorism polities fall within the military paradigm. This is due to both the weak legal frame work and the limited policing ability of the Yemeni state. The main strategy used by the Yemeni government is repression with limited decapitation operations and negotiations. The Yemeni military was not capable of using repression to end the two insurgencies. Several factors limit the repressive abilities of the military. First, the military is designed in a “coup-proofing” structure that limits the use of the best trained and best equipped units to Sanaa as a praetorian guard. Second, the military is still equipped and designed to fight a conventional war with little movement to adapt to the realities of counterinsurgency warfare. Third, the COIN strategy of block-and-bombard hurts the government’s popular support by inflicting high levels of civilian casualties while destroying property and infrastructure. Finally, the political elite’s power struggles undermined the military’s ability to effectively fight AQAP or the Huthis. The counterinsurgency campaigns were wagged slightly different. The government was more repressive with the Huthis and Zaydis in general. During the AQAP campaign the government made more of an effort to work with locals.

The only bright side to the public support for counterinsurgency policies is the government’s use of Popular Committees against AQAP. This policy is limited because the locals are siding with the government because AQAP happens to be worse than the government. It is a clear sign of the weakness of the government, which with all its armor and planes must rely on lightly armed and untrained tribal militias to act as its infantry.

C. EFFECTIVENESS OF HUTHI AND AL QAEDA INSURGENCIES

The third variable examined was the effectiveness the Huthis’ and AQAP’s military strategies and tactics, organization and resources, and recruitment (see Chapter IV). After the blitzkrieg offense that captured most of northwest Yemen by October 2014

(and possibly more by the time this paper is published) it became very clear that the Huthi's insurgency was more effective than al Qaeda's insurgency. What made the Huthis a spectacular success compared to AQAP and Ansar al-Shariah?

There are several key differences between the Huthi and AQAP insurgencies that make the Huthi insurgency more effective than al Qaeda's. First, the Huthis developed over a longer period of time and differed significantly from AQAP. While al Qaeda's Jihadi-Salafism ideology has a history that dates back to the 1980s in Yemen, the Believing Youth/Huthis have a longer continuous group. In addition, the nature of the Believing Youth/Huthis changed throughout time. The movement started as a peaceful social movement, evolved into to a resistance group, then into to an insurgency over the course of two decades. AQAP on the other hand, originated with violence and terrorism, only recently turning into an insurgent force. Second, the Huthi's organizational structure gives it an advantage over al Qaeda. The "tribal confederation"-type structure brings allies together with common interests and allows for a broader base of support. The addition of President Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC) to the pro-Huthi camp is probably a marriage of convenience, but highlights the pragmatic nature of the Huthi leadership. This pragmatism is also highlighted with other alliances including, tribes, the Revolutionary Youth, and the Hirak. In due course, the sectarian nature of the Huthis will limit the Huthis' growth and allies might quit the alliance if the common threat is gone. AQAP organizational structure differs because it is modeled after classic "al Qaeda" hierarchical structure. Finally, the Huthis use locals to fight in their home areas, while AQAP typically brings in outsiders, either from foreign countries or other parts of Yemen to administrate captured areas and fight for the short-lived Islamic Emirate of Abyan. Because of this, AQAP fought resistance to their rule by locals. This membership structure also favored the Huthis because fighters had knowledge of local terrain and motivation to fight. As the Huthis conquer Yemen though, this advantage will disappear. All these factors help explain the Huthis's more successful territorial gains.

D. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT, THE HUTHIS AND AQAP

The final variable for this paper examines the role of outside support for Huthi movement, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Yemeni government. This variable was the only one covered in two chapters for the sake of flow (see Chapter IV.A.4 and IV.B.4, and Chapter V). First, there is limited support from outside countries for either the Huthis or AQAP. The Huthis receive limited weapon shipments from Iran and AQAP has no international support. Second, the international support for Yemen's counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts focus almost exclusively on AQAP. The only notable exceptions were the Saudi Arabian border offensive in 2009, and the Qatari mediation efforts, which in retrospect did little to stop the Huthis.

The international activity in Yemen also negatively affected Yemen's counterinsurgency. Saudi Arabia's proselytization in Sadah destabilized Yemen, and was named as a major grievance of the Huthis. Payment to tribes to fight the Huthis once the conflict started probably expanded and lengthened the war by adding a tribal element. The Sadah wars had a tribal undertone and the post-Arab spring fighting was between Huthis and Salafist, and the latter for a time had Saudi backing. It is also possible that President Saleh thought that the U.S. provided "war of terror" equipment and training might give him the upper hand in the north, where he felt more threatened, causing him to fight instead of negotiate.

E. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

With dwindling oil, and thus money, continuing to attempt to repress the legitimate concerns of the Yemeni people—including the Huthis, Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth—is a losing prospect. Right now it appears no one faction is powerful enough to control all of Yemen. Yemeni government policy must change if it wants to remain in power. The Yemeni government needs to reorganize, retrain, and reequip the military to focus more on counterinsurgency, focus the fight on Ansar al-Shariah and AQAP, and improve the counterinsurgency strategy. The government should

adopt a strategy of clear-hold-build, followed by intelligence-driven police actively.⁵⁵⁴ The Yemeni government should also shift policy on groups with legitimate grievances like the Huthis, Hirak, and the Revolutionary Youth. Negotiating with these groups and finishing the National Dialog Conference (NDC) would be the first step.

For actors in the international community, while the home country's best interests should come first, greater consideration should be given to the overall situation in Yemen. After all, what good is a friendly partnership with Yemen if the government collapses? Outside countries should make a greater effort to offset unpopular activities in Yemen with actions that help raise the government of Yemen's popular support such as infrastructure projects, healthcare, education, and good governance. Encouraging the completion of the NDC and encouraging the Huthis to lay down its arms and become a non-violent political party should also be top priorities.

Finally, this study can inspire other future studies. First, a deep dive into why President Saleh chose repression over negotiation with the Huthis is needed. I still do not fully understand why the government conducted a full-scale offense instead of paying off the Huthi family. Tribes make a nuisance of themselves all the time in Yemen and the government normally just pays them off. Second, a better account of the Huthis takeover is needed. Much of the initial reporting is rumors or contradicts other reports. Lastly, the format of this report could be used to examine similar multiple “counterinsurgencies” in places like Iraq or Syria.

⁵⁵⁴ Marston and Malkasian “Introduction” in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, 14–5.

APPENDIX. MAP

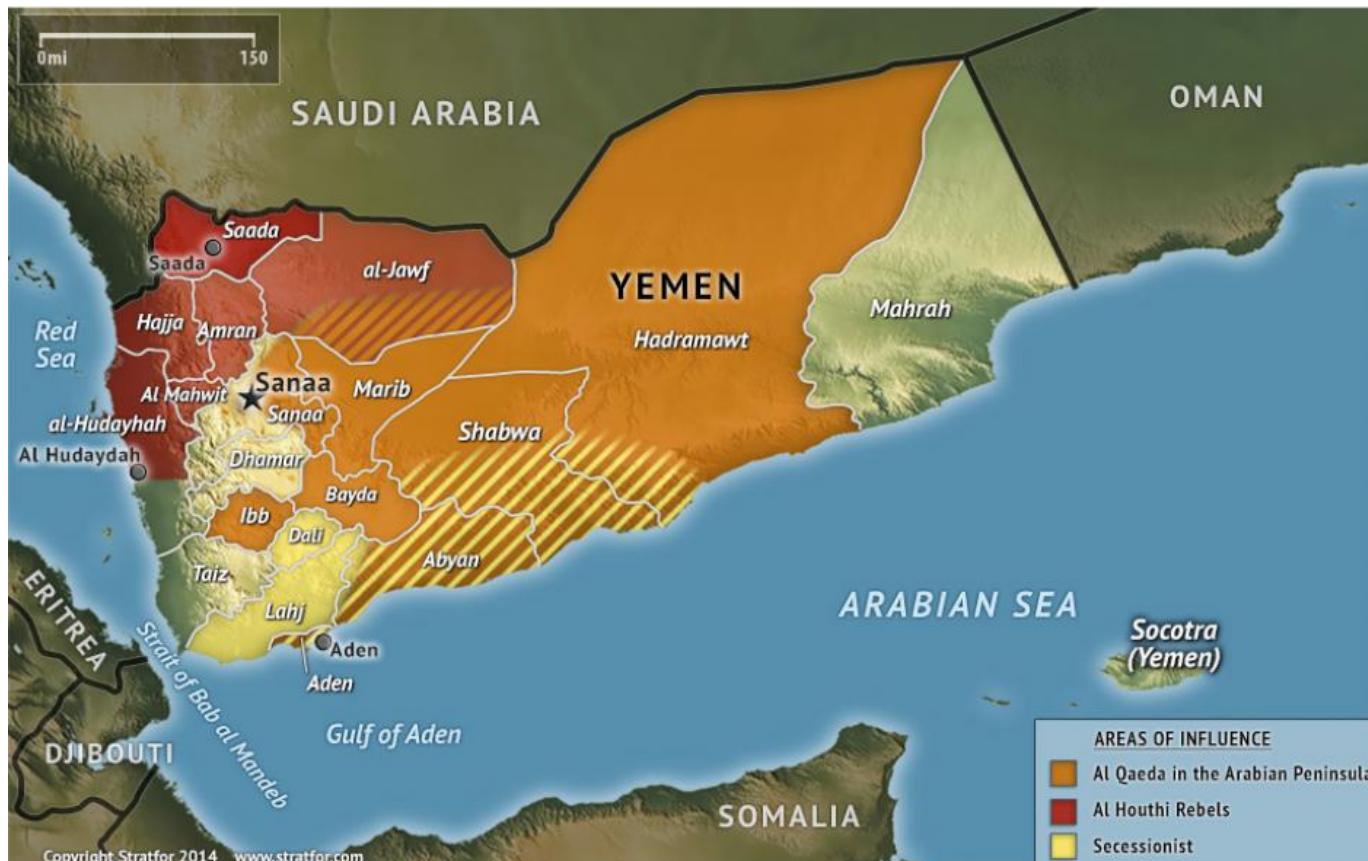


Figure 7. Conflict Zone Map⁵⁵⁵

555 "Yemen's Conflict Zones," Stratford: Global Intelligence Center, last modified July 30, 2014, <http://www.stratfor.com/image/yemens-conflict-zones>.

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